

# PERSONAL POWER

## PARENT LETTER 7: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In this **Safer, Smarter Teens: Personal Power** lesson, your child learned about the problem of Human Trafficking. *Human trafficking is when a child or adult is recruited, hidden, transported against their will by using force, fraud, or coercion for the personal gain of another.* Students learned that human trafficking is modern-day slavery. Historical references were used to help students understand that just as Harriett Tubman and other members of the Underground Railroad rescued slaves and brought them to freedom, there may be someone they know who has lost their personal power and needs to be rescued. Scenarios were used to illustrate risky situations and circumstances that may make teens more vulnerable. Methods of reporting suspected or actual human trafficking and the importance of advocating for themselves and others were reviewed.

### PARENT CONNECTION

This lesson was very important because teenagers have increased independence. Teens need to have knowledge of potential risks and develop the skills needed to maintain their personal power to stay safe. Human traffickers use tactics to control and manipulate others by creating an imbalance of power.

School-aged children right here in the United States – and even in your own community – are being trafficked, therefore it is essential that all students and parents are informed of the risks. There are factors that may increase the risk of being a victim of human trafficking including being a runaway, living in poverty, dropping out of school, having low self-esteem, and feeling a lack of opportunities. However, any child could be the target of human traffickers.

It is very important that you and your child understand how human traffickers maintain control. Control is maintained by removing the victim's freedom. Traffickers often control the money, food, personal identification, and living conditions of their victims – though every case is different. Traffickers often provide illegal drugs to victims, maintaining control through access to drugs. There is also a lot of emotional and psychological manipulation. Everyone wants to feel connected and loved by other people. We have a natural desire to have relationships. Relationships create bonds. In healthy relationships, there are positive and productive bonds. However, in unhealthy relationships there are destructive or trauma bonds. The creation of a trauma bond is an intentional process. The abuser starts by filling the need of the victim. The use of secrecy and isolation creates even more dependence. The abuser then manipulates the victim's behavior by making false promises. Abusers use the bonds that have formed to convince the victim to do things in the name of love. The trauma bond makes it very difficult for the victim to leave.

### TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY'S LESSON

Discuss various situations where a trafficker could approach your child. Apply the TFA strategy ("What do you think? How do you feel? What would you do?") if someone:

- Contacted you online and offered to meet you to talk about an afterschool job
- Stopped you in the mall and offered you a free photoshoot and modeling contract
- Offered you a job doing farm labor on the weekends for cash
- Chatted with you online and asked to meet in person at a party

During this lesson, students used the **A.C.T.** rule: **A**sk, **C**are, **T**ell to respond to an unsafe situation. It is essential for children to have the tools to advocate for themselves and others.

**Discuss the following scenario with your child:** One of your friends starts hanging out with some older kids. When you ask to get together, your friend tells you that he/she already has plans. You start to notice that your friend seems anxious and nervous since hanging out with these older friends.

What can you **Ask** your friend to find out if something is wrong?

*Your friend tells you he/she is being forced to deliver drugs for some of the older kids.*

What can you say to show you **Care**?

Who can you **Tell** to get your friend help?

Remind your child, how important it is to seek help if they or someone they know is in an unsafe situation. To seek help for human trafficking:

- Text **“BeFree” (233733)** and immediately connect with the **National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-3737-888)**.
- Local Law Enforcement - **911**
- Florida Abuse Hotline - **1.806.96.ABUSE (1.800.962.2873)**