



Grade 6

CAREGIVER CONNECTION

Dear Caregiver, Parent, or Guardian,

Building on previous lessons, this Caregiver Connection shares what students are learning in Lesson 5 of the *Safer, Smarter Teens* curriculum and provides simple ways for caregivers to support and reinforce these skills at home.

Lesson 5: Human Trafficking

In today's lesson, students will learn about the serious problem of **human trafficking**. They will learn that human trafficking and exploitation can happen anywhere and to anyone. The following are definitions that your child will see and discuss in class:

1. **Human Trafficking:** when someone is recruited, hidden, or transported against their will by using force, fraud, or coercion for the personal or financial gain of another
2. **Coercion:** Using threats, intimidation, and an unsafe balance of power to make someone do something
3. **Exploitation:** When someone takes advantage of and uses another person for their own benefit or personal gain.
4. **Force:** Maintaining control and making someone do something against their will by using or threatening violence
5. **Fraud:** Using unsafe promises, tricks, and lies to maintain control and make someone do something against their will
6. **Peer recruiter:** Someone close to a victim's age who builds a relationship with a victim to lure them into human trafficking; traffickers may use peer recruiters to establish relationships with other kids and teens to lure and trick them into being trafficked

Students will learn that they can use their personal power to help themselves and others. **A.C.T. – Ask, Care, Tell** is reintroduced to remind students that if they notice red flags, to **Ask** a friend what is wrong, show you **Care**, and **Tell** a trusted adult to seek help if safety is involved.

Students are taught that they can seek help in the case of known or suspected human trafficking from the National Human Trafficking Hotline by texting **"BeFree" (233733)** or calling **888-3737-888**; calling local Law Enforcement – 911; or calling their state's Abuse Hotline.

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It is important to remember that human trafficking and exploitation happen in all communities, even where you live. When we think, "it cannot happen to my children" we risk overlooking risks or red flags. Discuss the dangers of peer recruiters, who are kids or teens your child's age or slightly older. They may offer gifts, money, or activities that seem enticing. However, they are trying to trick and recruit kids to be trafficked. Remind your child of the importance of telling a trusted adult when they are approached by someone they don't know, even if they are close in age. Also remind your child that unsafe individuals often begin contact with intended victims online.

Tips to Further Today's Lesson:

Discuss today's video. Ask your child how Marco got trapped by Dominic. How were fraud, force, and coercion used to control Marco? Discuss how your child could handle a situation if they were approached and offered something they want in exchange for keeping secrets and doing favors. Have your child consider who they could go to for help.

Consider using the questions below to discuss the dangers of exploitation with your child:

- **Dominic was a peer recruiter. How did he trap Marco into an unsafe situation?**
 - *Dominic hung out with Marco and his friends. He used the information he learned, such as Marco wanting to play a new game that his parents would not allow, to befriend and form a relationship.*
- **Once the relationship was established, how did Dominic use fraud, coercion, and force to control Marco?**
 - *Fraud – Dominic pretended to offer the phone with the game on it out of friendship. In reality, he was giving Marco a game that his parents would not allow, so Marco had to keep it a secret. The phone was also a secret way for Dominic to track and contact Marco to make deliveries.*
 - *Coercion – When Marco no longer wanted to make deliveries, Dominic threatened that he would get in trouble with his parents. He also threatened that “he will be sorry” if he does not show up.*
 - *Force – Dominic grabbed Marco's arms and left bruises.*

Remind your child that you will always be there to help them if they get into an unsafe situation.

Have the Difficult Discussions

It can be easy for parents to believe that their child is not at risk of human trafficking, but the reality is that *any* child can be targeted. Traffickers identify and exploit vulnerabilities by offering gifts, favors, attention, or exciting experiences to build trust and influence.

Parents should be aware of factors that can increase a child's risk. One key factor is a child's desire to be connected, to feel loved, accepted, and to feel they belong. These are normal feelings, especially for young people, which is why open communication is so important. Having conversations about who your child feels connected to both in-person and online can feel awkward, but doing so is essential. Parents should know who their child is talking to, where they are going, and what they are doing.

If you realize you don't know any of your child's friends, it may be a sign that your child could be vulnerable. You can reduce risk by creating opportunities to stay connected:

- Invite your child's friends over to watch a movie, share pizza, or just spend time together
- Offer to meet friends at the park and bring snacks or games
- Take kids to school, sporting events, or other community activities

Building strong relationships, staying involved, and keeping open communication helps create a protective environment where children feel safe, supported, and connected.

How to Respond to Disclosure of Abuse or Exploitation

An adult's reaction to disclosure plays an important role in the beginning of the healing process for the child. Resist the urge to react strongly to the news or display anger toward the abuser. Instead, consider the following:

What to Say:

"I believe you."

"I'm really glad that you told me. It took a lot of courage to tell me."

"It's not your fault."

"We will work together to get you help. I will need to tell some other people who help protect children."

Be cautious with telling a child who has disclosed that "everything will be all right." There are many uncertainties that surround disclosure, emotions, and steps to recovery. Consider, instead, telling a child that they are important, people care about them and their safety, and that people will work to be with and support them moving forward.

Action Steps:

- If you know or suspect a child has become the victim of sexual abuse, you must make a report immediately. Find your local [reporting agency](#) or call **1-800-4-A-CHILD** (224453).
- Please make sure you are following your state/county/district/LEA policies regarding reporting digital safety and physical abuse.
- In many states, all citizens are considered mandatory reporters, and it is your responsibility to follow the proper protocols within 24 hours to report abuse.
- Access and share [The Guide to Hope and Healing](#) for guidance to recognize, report, and respond to a child who discloses.
- [Take It Down](#): This service is one step you can take to help remove online nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit photos and videos taken before the age of 18.

For more ways to talk to your child about staying safe, visit [safersmarterfamilies.org](#) and [safersmarterteens.org](#). For additional resources, visit [laurenskids.org](#).



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LAUREN'S KIDS

