

Grooming Information

Definition:

Grooming - Grooming is the predatory act of maneuvering another individual into a position that makes them more isolated, dependent, likely to trust, and more vulnerable to abusive behavior.

Description:

Grooming is a insidious predatory tactic, utilized by abusers. Grooming is practiced by Narcissists, Antisocial predators, con-artists and sexual aggressors, who target and manipulate vulnerable people for exploitation.

Child grooming is the deliberate act of establishing an emotional bond with a child, to lower the child's resistance. Child grooming can result in the minor falling victim to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, or specifically, to manipulate children into participating in slave labor, prostitution, and/or the production of child pornography.

Adult grooming is correspondent to child grooming and applies to any situation where an adult is primed to allow him or herself to be exploited or abused. While it is a common assumption that grooming is only practiced on the very young, identical emotional and psychological processes are commonly used to abuse or exploit adults the elderly, and those with compromised mental facilities.

A predator will identify and engage a victim and work to gain the target's trust, break down defenses, and manipulate the victim until they get whatever it is they are after. Overt attention, verbal seduction (flattery / ego stroking), recruitment, physical isolation, charm, gift-giving, normalizing, gaslighting, secrecy, and threats are all hallmarks of grooming.

- Abusers who groom their victims often claim to have a special connection with the abused. The so-called connection might be emotional, intellectual, sexual, spiritual, or all of the above. This is often backed up by the predator echoing back part of the target's own background or story, altered to fit the groomer's back-story, in order to confirm the connection.
 - In order to abuse or exploit another person without fear of discovery, a sexual predator or con artist will frequently condition their intended victim to keep secrets for them. When building this bond of trust, an abuser may share seemingly personal or private information, and then swear the
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victim to secrecy. The victim is made to believe that they are being trusted with something of value, before being asked to share something of value with his/her abuser.

- Abusers use shared secrets to bind their victims to them. By degrees, the target is gradually lured in to revealing private information, giving up money, property or sexual favors, or permitting /engaging in inappropriate, unsafe, or illegal behaviors. • The victim is often drawn in to being a "co-conspirator" (also known as forced teaming) with his or her abuser.
- Eventually, the bond of secrecy is nearly always reinforced with threats, shaming and guilt to keep the victim silent about his or her shared crimes or misdeeds.

Who are the victims of grooming? Men. Women. Children. Young adults. The middle-aged. The elderly. The lonely and the emotionally compromised. Those whose defenses are down. Anyone with soft boundaries. In short: There is no prototypical victim. Almost anyone can be vulnerable to grooming. Predators are practiced, and extremely good at what they do. Those who are not 't, tend to get caught. Those who get caught, tend to learn from their mistakes, and refine their techniques. You don't have to be especially gullible to fall victim to grooming, but if you learn the signs, you can successfully identify a potential abuser, and avoid exploitation:

- Predators work in the shadows, and have something to hide.
- Predators claim to feel a "special connection" with their targets, even if they've only just met.
- Predators recruit co-conspirators (forced teaming) to fight their battles and do their bidding.
- Predators draw their victims in by sharing private information then swearing them to secrecy.
- Predators practice divide and conquer techniques in order to manipulate others.

Examples of Grooming:

- An individual who lures lonely or vulnerable people into a romantic relationship in order to position themselves for monetary gain.
- An adult in a position of authority who uses their status to entice minor children into engaging in sexual activity.
- Anyone who manufactures a (false) bond of trust in order to extract promises or favors from another.

What it feels like:

Grooming can feel exhilarating – at first. The predator employs attentiveness, sensitivity, (false) empathy and plenty of positive reinforcement to seduce their victim. For their part, victims can be so enthralled with, or overwhelmed by the attention they are receiving; they will often overlook or ignore red flags that might alert them that the person who is showering them with that attention is somehow “off”. Little by little, the abuser breaks through a victim’s natural defenses, gains trust, and manipulates or coerces the victim into doing his/her bidding. The victim finds themselves willingly handing over money or assets, engaging in inappropriate, illegal or morally ambiguous activities, or acting as a proxy for the abuser, fighting the abuser’s battles, and carrying out their will. The victim often feels confusion, shame, guilt, remorse and disgust at his or her own participation. Equally powerful, is the panic that comes with the threat of being exposed for engaging these activities. There may also be an overwhelming fear of losing the emotional bond that has been established with an abuser. The victim becomes trapped, depressed or despondent.

What NOT to Do:

- Don't trust too soon, or share too much with someone you've only just met.
- Don't fall for false flattery, or verbal seduction.
- Don't compromise your boundaries.
- Don't allow yourself to be isolated from others against your own better judgment.
- Don't blame yourself for how the other person is behaving.
- Don't stay in the room if the situation becomes physically, verbally or emotionally unhealthy.
- Don't go it alone or keep what you are experiencing a secret.

What TO Do:

- Use caution around someone you may have only just met, who pays you too many compliments, gives you too much attention, demands too much of your time, shares too much information, or tries to swear you to secrecy.
 - Question motives.
 - Learn to pay attention to your gut, and trust those feelings to guide you.
 - Remind yourself you are not to blame for what a predator is attempting to do to you.
 - Learn to say no, and mean it.
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Overview

Child grooming involves [psychological manipulation](#) in the form of [positive reinforcement](#) and [foot-in-the-door](#) tactics, using activities that are typically legal but later lead to illegal activities^{[[citation needed](#)]}. This is done to gain the child's [trust](#) as well as the trust of those responsible for the child's well-being. Additionally, a trusting relationship with the family means the child's parents are less likely to believe potential accusations.^{[[5](#)]}

In the case of sexual grooming, child pornography images are often shown to the child as part of the grooming process.^{[[1](#)][[2](#)][[3](#)]}

To establish a good relationship with the child and the child's family, child groomers might do several things. For example, they might take an undue interest in someone else's child, to be the child's "special" friend to gain the child's trust^{[[citation needed](#)]}. They might give gifts or money to the child for no apparent reason (toys, dolls, etc.). They may show pornography—videos or pictures—to the child, hoping to make it easy for the child to accept such acts, thus [normalizing](#) the behavior. They may simply talk about sexual topics. These are just some of the methods a child groomer might use to gain a child's trust and affection to allow them to do what they want. Hugging and kissing or other physical contact, even when the child does not want it, can happen. To the groomer, this is a way to get close.^{[[dubious](#) - [discuss](#)]} Or rather could reflect their depraved intentions toward the child. They might talk about problems normally discussed between adults, or at least people of the same age. Topics might include marital problems and other conflicts. They may try to gain the child's parents' trust by befriending them, with the goal of easy access to the child. The child groomer might look for [opportunities](#) to have time alone with the child. This can be done by offering to babysit. The groomer may invite the child for sleepovers. This gives them the opportunity to sleep in the same room or even the same bed with the child.

How to Recognize Grooming

By Anne Collier

Sometimes the very reason kids and teens blog and spend time in social-networking sites is to "meet new friends." So it's not always easy for them to tell when "new friends" have bad intentions, and research consistently shows that about 20% of online kids receive unwanted sexual solicitations (see "Other resources" below).

"Grooming" is the way sexual predators get from bad intentions to sexual exploitation. Basically, grooming is manipulation. It's the process pedophiles use to get children they target online to meet with them offline, the simple goal being sex.

Sometimes it involves flattery, sometimes sympathy, other times offers of gifts, money, or modeling jobs. It can also involve all of the above over extended periods of time. That's why it's called "grooming." Experts say the short-term goal of these manipulators is for the victim to feel loved or just comfortable enough to want to meet them in person, and these people know that

sometimes takes time. That's ok, they'd say, because groomers tend to have a lot of patience, and they also tend to "work" a number of targets at once, telling all of them that they are "the only one for me." You can imagine how well that can work with kids seeking sympathy, support, or validation online.

That's about as general as we can get, because grooming is carefully individualized. Groomers design what they say as they go along, tailoring their flattery or offers as they learn about the victim. Here are some tactics kids can watch out for (these are themes for which there are *many* variations, tell your kids):

- **"Let's go private."** (*leave the public chatroom and create a private chat or move to instant-messaging or phone texting*)
 - **"Where's your computer in the house?"** (*to see if parents might be around*)
 - **"Who's your favorite band? designer? film? gear?"** (*questions like these tell the groomer more about you so they know what gifts to offer – e.g., concert tickets; Webcam, software, clothes, CDs*)
 - **"I know someone who can get you a modeling job."** (*flattery, they figure, will get them everywhere*)
 - **"I know a way you can earn money fast."** (*one of the tactics that snagged Justin Berry, 13, into what became his Webcam prostitution business, reported by the [New York Times](#)*)
 - **"You seem sad. Tell me what's bothering you."** (*the sympathy schtick*)
 - **"What's your phone number?"** (*asking for personal info of any kind – usually happens at a later stage, after the target's feeling comfortable with the groomer – but all online kids know not to give out personal info online, right?!*)
 - **"If you don't... [do what I ask], I'll... [tell your parents OR share your photos in a photo blog / Webcam directory / file-sharing network]"** (*intimidation – used as the groomer learns more and more about the target*)
 - **"You are the love of my life."** (*what "Amy," 15, fell for before traveling out of state to meet someone who'd groomed her – see ["Amy's Story"](#) at [Netsmartz.org](#)*)
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Is Your Child Being Groomed by a Predator?

The FBI estimates that there is one child molester per square mile in the United States. The majority of molested children are victimized by family members, close relatives or people who have easy access to them. Is your child being groomed by a pedophile? Dr. Phil offers the following warning signs:

- You're vulnerable if you are a single parent and lack time to spend with your child.
- You're vulnerable if you are desperate for help from outsiders.
- If your child is from a broken or unstable home, pedophiles recognize this, and use it as a way to get inside.
- If there is someone in your life who has a really unusual, too-good-to-be-true interest in your child, it probably is too good to be true.

- If someone lavishes gifts on your child, and the person has unusual knowledge of kids' popular interests " what shows they like, what music they like " pedophiles brief themselves on those things.
- Your child receives mail, gifts or packages from someone you don't know.
- If this person shows up without a child at child-intensive events and locations, that's a problem.
- If you're dealing with a person who always offers and angles for alone time with your child, you need to be very concerned.
- Is your child spending large amounts of time online, especially at night?
- Does your child use an online account that belongs to someone else?
- Have you found pornography on your child's computer?
- Your child receives phone calls from men you don't know or is making calls to numbers you don't recognize.
- Take notice if your child turns off the computer monitor quickly or changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.
- Is your child withdrawing from family?

Common Child Molester Strategies:

-- from [*A Profile of the Child Molester*](#)

- Befriending parents, particularly single parents, to gain access to their children
- Offering babysitting services to overextended parents or caregivers
- Taking jobs and participating in community events that involve children
- Attending sporting events for children or offering to coach children's sports
- Volunteering in youth organizations, offering to chaperone overnight trips
- Loitering in places children frequent: playgrounds, malls, game arcades, etc.
- Spending time in Internet gaming and social communities, learning the online interests and lingo of youngsters
- Becoming foster parents