



awareness to action
Wisconsin
Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

UNDERSTANDING GROOMING

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



WHAT IS GROOMING?

Grooming is when someone tries to build a relationship with another person with the intent to hurt them in some way. It's important to know that grooming can happen online or in person and can affect people of different ages and backgrounds.

STAGES OF GROOMING

1

Finding a target

People who groom look for someone they think they can easily control or manipulate. Sometimes, adults around the child may also be groomed by the perpetrator.

2

Earning trust

They act friendly or supportive to make the child trust them, pretending to share interests or offering emotional help. This trust-building may extend to the adults in the child's life, such as parents or caregivers.

3

Building a relationship

They deepen the relationship and start doing things that cross boundaries or make the child feel dependent on them. This could involve gaining the trust of not only the child but also those responsible for the child's well-being.

4

Keeping them alone

They try to keep the child away from friends and family, so they rely more on the perpetrator. This isolation may extend to the child's caregivers, making it harder for them to recognize the signs of grooming.

5

Making it sexual

The grooming becomes about sex, with the groomer introducing more physical behaviors or talking about it to make the child more accepting. Adults around the child may also be groomed to overlook or dismiss concerning behaviors.

6

Taking control

The groomer controls the child using fear, guilt or manipulation to keep them in the abusive relationship. This control may also extend to influencing the perceptions and actions of the adults involved in the child's life.

COMMON GROOMING TACTICS



SAYING NICE THINGS AND GIVING GIFTS

Groomers often use compliments or presents to make the victim like them.



FINDING WEAK SPOTS

They look for things that bother the victim and use them to make the victim feel like they need the groomer.



TRICKING

Groomers use lies or tricks to control how the victim feels or acts.



KEEPING THEM AWAY

They gradually keep the victim away from people who could help them.



THREATENING

They might use threats to make the victim do what they want.

Grooming isn't just an online problem; it happens in schools, communities and even families.



9 THINGS PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN DO TO STOP GROOMING

1. **Talk to your child** about what grooming is and explain that it's not okay for anyone to try to manipulate or control them.
2. **Teach your child about boundaries** and encourage them to speak up if someone makes them feel uncomfortable.
3. **Monitor your child's online activities** and set boundaries for internet usage to minimize their risk of encountering groomers.
4. **Encourage open communication** with your child and let them know they can come to you with any concerns or questions.
5. **Teach your child about consent** and that they have the right to say no to anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.
6. **Be aware of adults that your child interacts with regularly** and keep open communication with teachers, coaches, and other caregivers.
7. **Encourage your child to trust their instincts** and to seek help if they feel unsafe or threatened by someone's behavior.
8. **Stay informed about grooming tactics** and warning signs so you can recognize them if they arise.
9. **Report any suspicious behavior** to the authorities or child protective services to ensure the safety of your child and others in the community.

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