

Playing it S.A.F.E.

Human Sex Trafficking is a form of child abuse that occurs when someone, under the age of 18, is advertised, solicited or exploited through a commercial sex act.

A commercial sex act is any sex act where something of value (money, food, drugs or a place to stay) is given to or received by any person for sexual activity. (NCMEC)

If someone is a survivor of human sex trafficking - it is NOT their fault! There are people who can help. Contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1.888.373.7888



Teens must learn how to Identify, Respond & Prevent Human Sex Trafficking.

Examples of Sex Trafficking

- A mother allows a drug dealer to engage in sex acts with her child in exchange for drugs.
- A 14 year old is sent a cell phone from an online gaming "friend" in exchange for him/her sending a sexually explicit photo.
- A teen runs away from home and a "peer" asks them to post sexually explicit photos online to get money to cover hotel and food costs.
- A romantic partner asks a teen to participate in sexual acts with another to make them more popular.
- A child/teen is bartered to perform sex acts in place of paying rent or buying food.

Identifying Human Sex Trafficking

Signs of someone being a victim of human sex trafficking include:

- Dating an older person who "gives you the creeps" and the victim is super secretive about him/her
- Has unexplained cash or receives lots of expensive gifts
- Shops for clothes they cannot afford
- Displays feelings like depression or anger - acts nervous, tense or "brain washed"
- Misses a lot of school or drops out
- Runs away and avoids friends/family
- Starts drinking or doing illegal drugs
- Has a 2nd cell phone or hotel room keys

Responding to Sex Trafficking

- What happened is NOT the victim's fault
- Go to a safe place - home, friend's home, police station or hospital
- Tell a trusted grownup - school counselor, parent or law enforcement.
- DO NOT confront the trafficker!
- For further assistance, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1.888.373.7888.



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If someone is a survivor of human sex trafficking - it is NOT their fault!

Survivors have many feelings when living through human trafficking. They may feel shame, blame themselves or feel unworthy of a better life. Some survivors have formed a “trauma bond” with their trafficker and do not even see themselves as abuse victims. Others fear for their own, or a loved one’s safety. They may also have unrealistic fears regarding law enforcement or others who can help them. A counselor will help them work through these feelings. SEMO-NASV can help (573.332.1900).



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Characteristics of Human Sex Trafficking Perpetrators

- Teens can be trafficked by a relative or someone they perceive as a relative (“auntie” or “uncle”)
- The child/teen may be trafficked by a “buyer” because they offer money, food, and/or shelter in exchange for sexual activity or photos.
- Traffickers often target youth who do not have strong support networks (family/friends), are marginalized by society or have suffered past violence. When youth feel unloved, unsupported, or feel like they don’t belong they become more vulnerable to human sex trafficking.
- Traffickers are masters of manipulation and prey upon teens who exhibit these characteristics.

Preventing Human Sex Trafficking

Now that we know what human sex trafficking is, perpetrator characteristics and how to respond, let’s talk about how you can prevent human sex trafficking.

Research. Learn more about human sex trafficking through online sites such as The Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Having a better understanding of Human Sex Trafficking will allow you to assist in preventing it from happening to you and others in your life.

Treat others with RESPECT. Many times, traffickers target youth with poor self-esteem, who do not feel loved, or have a history of physical or sexual violence in their lives. If you notice a teen who is experiencing one of these conditions, spend time with them. Let them know you care about them and respect them.

Stay SAFE Online.

- Only add people you know personally to your friends list.
- Do not give out personal information, even if it is requested; a sex trafficker can use your contact information and information on your family and personal life as a means of control.
- Never send nudes or explicit photos.
- If a site advertises as professional, but does not look legitimate, they are probably not!

