

Sexual Offender Grooming Techniques

Before an assault happens, most offenders spend a great deal of time and energy in the process of “grooming” their victims, gaining the victim’s confidence in order to assume a position of power.

The grooming procedure is extremely effective with young people, and consequently, the vast majority of children and adolescents do not disclose abusive situations. Often, offenders will groom parents and caregivers of the victims simultaneously, reinforcing their position as a trusted member of the child’s inner circle.

Once the victim perceives the acquaintance, friend or family member as someone to be trusted, the child or teen may feel that he or she has no alternative but to accept the abuse. The offender then begins introducing the victim to sexual types of touch. This is often accomplished slowly, so that the victim is gradually desensitized and then inappropriate behavior escalates.

Throughout this process, offenders manipulate victims to keep the sexual assault a secret by using trickery or threats, such as:

- Bribery: “I’ll let you go shopping if you let me do this.”
- Threats of Harm to the Teen/Child: “You are really going to get it if you tell anyone.”
- Threats of Harm to a Sibling: “I’ll do this to your little sister if you say no.”
- Threats of Harm to the Offender: “If you tell, I’ll go to jail.”
- Withdrawal of Affection: “I won’t like you anymore if you tell.”
- Break-up of the Family: “This would really hurt your parents if they knew.”
- Taking Advantage of the Child/Teen’s Innocence: “It’s OK, everybody does this,” or “If you tell anyone, I’ll just say you were lying.”

For more information, contact the KCSARC 24-hour resource line at 1-800-825-7273.