

The grooming line



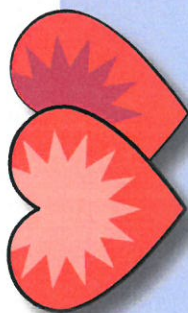
Targeting stage

- Observing the child/young person
- Selection of child/young person
- Befriending – being nice, giving gifts, caring, taking an interest, giving compliments, etc
- Gaining and developing trust
- Sharing information about young people between other abusive adults



Friendship forming stage

- Making young people feel special
- Giving gifts and rewards
- Spending time together
- Listening and remembering
- Keeping secrets
- Being there for them
- 'No-one understands you like I do'; being their best friend
- Testing out physical contact – accidental touching
- Offering protection



Loving relationship stage

- Being their boyfriend/girlfriend
- Establishing a sexual relationship
- Lowering their inhibitions – eg showing them pornography
- Engaging them in forbidden activities – eg going to clubs, drinking, taking drugs
- Being inconsistent – building up hope and then punishing them



Abusive relationship stage

- Becomes an 'unloving' sexual relationship
- Withdrawal of love and friendship
- Reinforcing dependency on them – stating young person is 'damaged goods'
- Isolation from family and friends
- Trickery and manipulation – 'you owe me'
- Threatening behaviour
- Physical violence
- Sexual assaults
- Making them have sex with other people
- Giving them drugs
- Playing on the young person's feeling of guilt, shame and fear

Appendix 2

About the grooming line

The word *grooming* is used to describe the process that abusive adults use to trick a child or young person into believing they are trustworthy so that they can eventually sexually exploit the young person.

The grooming line is based on Barnardo's experience from work with children and young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation as well as theoretical work from other experts in this field.

By being aware of the whole pattern of these behaviours you will be able to quickly spot things that you might need to be suspicious of if they happen. This will mean you are better able to look out for yourself and other young people around you.

Targeting stage

At this stage the abusive adult is choosing which child or young person to work on and beginning to manoeuvre them into a situation where they can increase contact with the child.

Observing

This means the adult is watching a child or young person, without them necessarily realising. It may happen quickly, or over some time; maybe in a public place where the young person often is, for example, outside a local shop.

Selecting

We know abusive adults are more likely to approach a child who looks vulnerable: they may be on their own, look unhappy, or not be in school. Abusive adults also choose young people who are sexualised in their behaviour; looking for signs like giving lots of eye contact and smiles to strangers of the opposite sex or being boisterous and drawing lots of attention to themselves.

Initiating contact and gaining trust

This can be done quite simply, by saying 'Hi', being friendly or keeping a promise. This is what is confusing about telling grooming from just being nice. But if a person is older than you and you don't know them, question why they are doing this.

Sharing a child/young person's information

Adults involved in grooming children often work together, as well as alone. A very common targeting behaviour is adults asking young people for their mobile numbers and then sharing this information so that the young person can be contacted by their associates without anyone else knowing.

Appendix 2 About the grooming line

Friendship forming stage

In this phase an abusive adult puts a lot of effort into becoming important to the child or young person; someone they rely on. In this way the adult develops a strong influence. At this stage there still may not appear to be anything obviously wrong, but there will be signs that you can look out for:

Making a child/young person feel special

This is often done just by giving lots of compliments or noticing little things. An adult who is grooming might pay special attention to what music you like or what you were wearing the last time they saw you.

Giving gifts and rewards

These may be presents or given in return for doing a favour. Things like mobile phones, jewellery, drugs, alcohol, money and clothes are commonly used.

Spending time together

Spending time with people you like is normal, but an adult spending an unusually large amount of time with a young person or child can make them dependent and miss the adult a lot when they are apart. This could include spending time in an adult's home with them.

Listening and remembering

The adult will listen carefully to any personal details shared and remember them. This makes anyone feel listened to and valued and is a simple way of making someone feel understood. However, an abuser can use this later especially if it is personal or embarrassing. Think very carefully about what you share. After all, information is power.

Keeping secrets

An abusive adult may not want others to know about their friendship with a child or young person, or that they even see each other. If an adult says not to tell anyone else what you are doing or where you are going with them you should be very careful and ask yourself why the need for secrecy.

Being there

Giving a child or young person the message that if they need anything, the adult will be there for them, can be part of grooming. This is especially likely if the child or young person has shared problems they are having. It can be another way of encouraging them to rely on the adult.

Appendix 2 About the grooming line

Understanding better than anyone else

The adult makes the young person believe that they understand them and know them like no one else. If this happens it could include bad mouthing or putting down parents or carers. Be aware that this can be part of making you dependent on someone.

Testing out physical contact

It could be just an 'accidental' light touch to the knee or face but the adult is probably testing your reaction to physical contact. If this happens and you flinch and don't know what to do, would they carry on? What if you said 'No', would they carry on then?

Offering protection

An abusive adult will often offer a young person protection. This technique is particularly used with children who are being bullied, for example.

Loving relationship stage

The most common grooming method used with young people is to become their 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'. However, this stage can also be a close, protective, non-sexual relationship. What the methods have in common is that from inside, it looks and feels like a very caring and genuine relationship. But, while developing this illusion of intimacy and love, the abusive adult is gaining full control of the young person and making them very vulnerable. It is a calculated technique and it works.

Being a boyfriend or girlfriend

They may simply describe the young person as their boyfriend or girlfriend and introduce them as, for example, their 'girl'.

Establishing a sexual relationship

An abusive adult may offer to teach a young person how to have sex or 'make love', or even have sex with them. Online, this can be teaching sexual things in private chat rooms or via a webcam.

Lowering inhibitions

Young people and children have been shown child abuse images to get them used to thinking it is normal for an adult to have sex with a child. Remember, this sort of picture is not 'pornography', it is child abuse and it is illegal to make, share or view.

Involving in forbidden activities

The adult may offer alcohol, drugs or entry to adult venues, such as clubs, pubs and parties. While this might seem exciting or fun, the danger is that you become increasingly involved in things that you cannot easily tell another adult about, which could make you vulnerable.

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Being inconsistent

An abusive adult may make a child or young person insecure about their affection for them. One minute an abusive adult builds up their victim's hopes and the next they punish them. For example, they may promise something but later claim that they didn't mean it. This can build dependency.

Abusive relationship stage

By this stage it is clear that something bad is happening. Techniques of control and isolation become obvious, but because the adult has made the young person dependent, it is very hard for them to get away. The more trapped and isolated the young person is, the more cruel the adult can afford to be.

Withdrawing friendship and love

The abuser no longer acts as if they care about the young person's feelings.

Using for sex

Sex is demanded by the adult, but it is not loving or romantic.

Reinforcing dependency

The adult lowers the young person's self esteem further, maybe by calling them 'damaged goods'. This may be linked to information they shared in the past, or it may be because the adult has made the young person do humiliating things.

Isolating from family and friends

This could include not allowing any contact at all with family and friends and taking away photos or reminders of life before the abuser.

Tricking and manipulating

An abusive adult will claim they are owed for clothes, drugs or anything they gave the young person. They may say the payment is doing something the young person doesn't want to do, usually something sexual and/or illegal.

Using violence and assault

Abusive adults will frequently use violence or threats of violence to keep a young person frightened and in their control. If this ever happens to you it is vital that you find a way to confide in a trustworthy adult and get help to leave the situation quickly. Violence will almost always get more serious over time.