

# The Grooming Process

## Stage One: Targeting the Youth

- Vulnerabilities
- Identify unfulfilled needs
- Level of isolation/adult involvement
- Lower self-esteem

## Stage Two: Gaining Trust and Legitimacy

- Gain youth's trust
- Identify youth's needs; fulfill them
- Gain trust of adults in youth's circle
- Legitimize involvement in youth's life.

## Stage Three: Fulfilling the need

- Fulfill identified needs
- Assume position of importance in youth's life
- May give youth gifts/affection/extra attention
- No built-in mechanism of transparency/accountability

## Stage Four: Isolating the Youth

- Uses "special relationship" to be alone with youth
- Isolating youth reinforces "special connection"
- May reinforce the relationship by making youth feel loved/appreciated in ways they are not elsewhere
- Emotional and physical isolation created by exploiter
- Isolating the youth makes it harder for the abuse to be reported

## Stage Five: Sexualizing the Relationship

- Emotional dependence and trust established
- Progressively sexualizes the relationship
- Desensitization is subtle (going swimming)
- Exploits youth's natural curiosity
- Shape youth's sexual preferences
- Youth see self as a sexual being
- Relationship with exploiter understood in sexual terms
- Creates space for exploiter to normalize sexualized relationships between youth and adults

## Stage Six: Maintaining Control

- Secrecy and blame
- Youth may withdraw
- Fear of being unwanted
- Fear of losing "benefits" from the relationship (no longer meeting needs)
- Exploiter may have threatened family/friends of youth to prevent disclosure of abuse
- Youth may be made to feel responsible