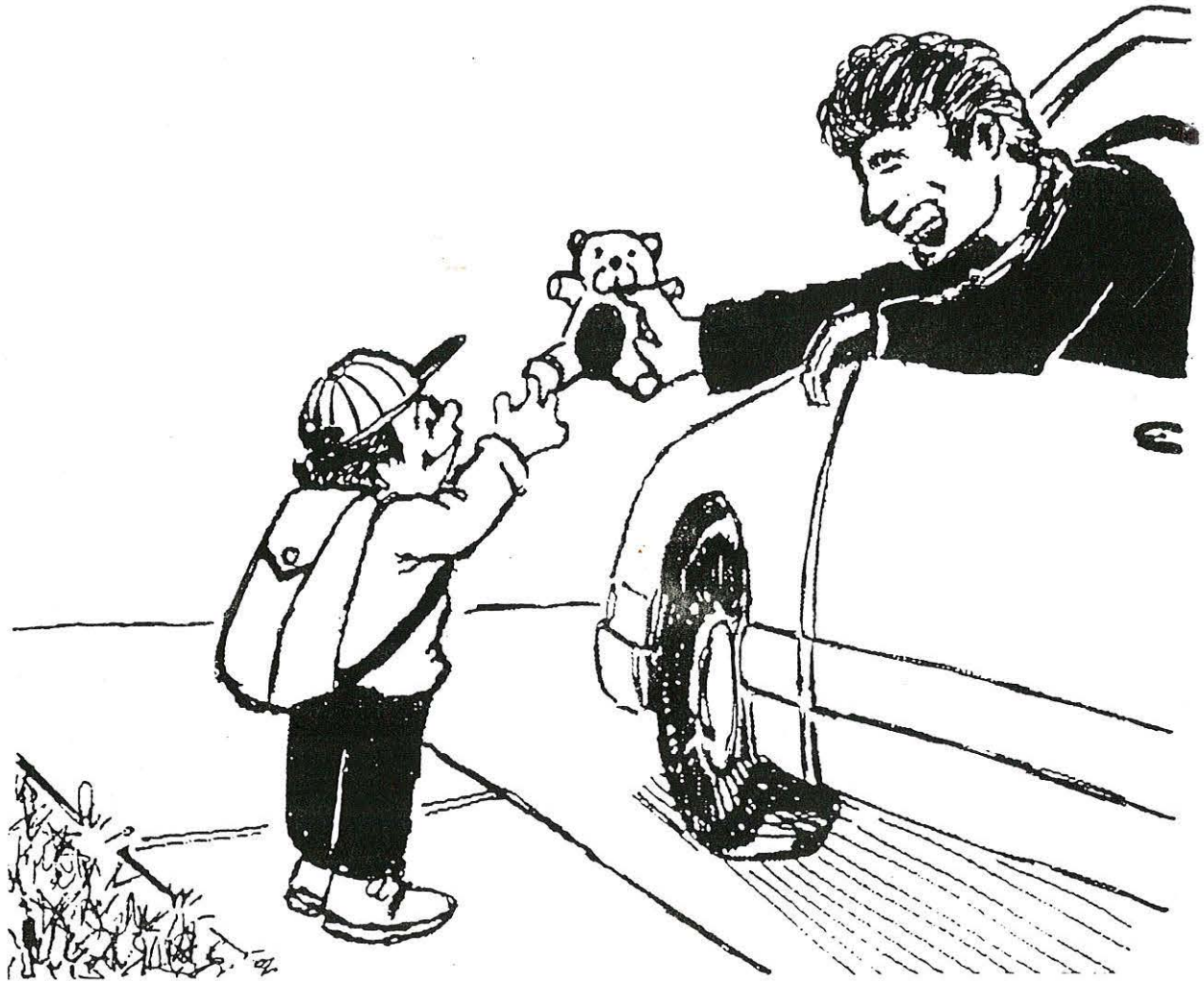


STREET SAFE KIDS

Protecting children from sexual predators – a street-proofing manual



“Street Safe Kids” is one of the most comprehensive self-defense and street-proofing courses available. We strongly recommend that parents enroll their children in this ‘hands-on’ program.”

Mabyn Armstrong, director of prevention
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George J. Manoli

The Child Seduction Process



Why seduce a child rather than abduct them? From a child molester's point of view: *"If you select your victim properly and seduce them properly, the secret takes care of itself."* It seems to make little sense to abduct a child victim. Child molesters who nonviolently seduce or coerce their victims with attention, affection, kindness, and gifts, frequently come under minimal investigative scrutiny. Those who forcibly abduct and physically injure their victims usually become subjects of large-scale, intensive investigations.

To control someone through a seduction process takes a certain amount of skill and cunning. These master seducers are willing to invest all the time needed to stalk their target, lower their victims' inhibitions and gain their cooperation and 'consent.' They are skilled at identifying with their victim, communicating at the youngster's level and at recognizing the child's emotional needs, especially children who feel badly or are starving for adult affection. They know the latest craze, the 'in' video games, toys, television shows, and movies. They are skilled at recognizing and then temporarily filling the emotional and physical needs of the targeted child. They often show a great deal of compassion and knowledge concerning the child's interests and are masters at listening and paying attention to children, an ability many parents often lack.

Phase 1 - Target and seduce : Once a pedophile begins to stalk or target a potential child victim who fits his age and gender preference, chances are he will either succeed or he will be very reluctant in giving up access to the child until he has finished with his victim. Since they are generally disguised as respectable members of the community, a determined child molester will watch, plot, gather information (child's demeanor, personality, dress, financial status, etc.) and bit by bit try to manipulate situations in order to gain the child's confidence. Some molesters have been known to even start 'grooming' a potential child victim long before the child has reached the molester's age preference. Undoubtedly, the abuser is often far from a 'stranger' by the time the actual abuse takes place. The parents' ignorance and the child's naivete in fully comprehending what is happening, is the pedophile's best cover.

The next step in this phase is to seduce the victim's parents by gaining their trust and confidence so that they will allow him free access to their child. The seduction of the victim's parents can be done in a variety of ways. If the child comes from a broken home the offender will sometimes pretend romantic interest in the mother. The relationship with the mother can be used as a cover for his interest in her children. Her targeted child can be used as bait to lure or gain access to other children in the neighborhood or school.

Phase 2 - Lowering of inhibitions and the sexual phase : Once the parent's and child's confidence has been gained, the pedophile will gradually and skillfully try to lower the child's sexual inhibitions without his victim actually realizing it. He will try to exploit a child's natural curiosity about sex.

"Sadly, thousands of children each year learn about sex from a pedophile. A trusted and well-liked adult tells them "it's okay" and the child believes him. The pedophile commits the unkindest cut of all: breach of trust." (Street Sense For Parents, Louis R. Mizell, Jr., 1995).

The child molester is overwhelmed with urges to act out fantasies with children in a sexual way. They will often effortlessly persuade the child that sex with an adult is a permissible activity and will work diligently in neutralizing the child's natural defense mechanisms.

"The typical adolescent boy is easily sexually aroused, sexually curious, sexually inexperienced, and somewhat rebellious. All these traits combine to make the adolescent boy one of the easiest victims of seduction." (Child Sex Rings, A Behavioral Analysis, NCMEC, 1992).

It may begin subtly, with simple affection, like a kiss on the cheek, holding hands, a pat on the bum, an arm over the shoulder, a hug, eventually graduating to more explicit behavior. Once the barrier of personal space has been broken and the child starts feeling more at ease with the idea, the offender will then advance to sexual play and fondling which may include such activities as wrestling on the floor or bed, playing some kind of physical game, hide-and-seek in the dark, working out with weights, strip poker, drying the child with a towel, massaging an injury, swimming nude in the pool, or cuddling in bed.

The methods used to seduce children in the sexual phase are extremely creative. Some child molesters distort what they are actually doing by informing the child what is being done between them is for a purpose other than the actual one.

Some victims are tricked into posing in the nude, while others are filmed secretly with hidden cameras. These photos or films are frequently sold or exchanged to other pedophiles or used for the molester's personal stimulation.

"The introduction of photography or video cameras during this process is common. Innocent pictures progress to pictures of the 'fun and games,' which progress to nude or partially nude pictures, which then escalate into sexually explicit pictures." (Child Molesters, NCMEC, 1992).

The molester will frequently talk to the child about sexual activities or show pornographic films, magazines and photographs to the child in order to stimulate their interest, lower his or her inhibitions or simply show the acts in which the molester wishes to engage.

At times, they merely try to get their victim in a position where they are changing clothes together (by squirting the child with a garden hose, turning up the heat in the house, doing a physical examination of the child, etc.), showering together, or staying overnight and napping together. If the child molester achieves either of these objectives, the success of the seduction is almost assured.

In the sexual phase many pedophiles manipulate their victim, especially adolescent boys, with knockout drugs and alcohol in order to render them helpless, lower their inhibitions, or molest them while they are asleep. By the time the child realizes what is going on and what is happening to them, they are entangled in the middle of it all and ashamed of their complicity.

A variety of massages and games like strip poker (and other strip games), tickling, 'touchy-feelie' games, and games that require a blindfold are often used in the Phase 2 of the seduction process. The pedophile may also use a variety of means at their disposal like: 'threats, guilt, bribes, pressure, blackmail, entrapment, or adult authority,' to lure and convince the targeted child into having sexual relationships with the molester.

"The result is a victim who feels responsible for his abuse and embarrassed about his actions. Once a victim is seduced, each successive sexual incident becomes easier and quicker. Eventually, the child victim may even take the initiative in the seduction....Because victims have been carefully seduced and often do not realize they are victims, they repeatedly and voluntarily return to the offender. Why do they return? Most likely, he does not realize he is a victim. Some victims are willing to trade sex for attention and affection. The sex itself might even be enjoyable. The offender may be treating them better than anyone has ever treated them. " (Child Molesters, NCMEC, 1992).

Once the offender reaches sexual gratification through intercourse, masturbation, exhibitionism or oral sex, the grip of the compulsion loosens and reality sets in. We now enter Phase 3. It is at this point that the child victim is beaten, threatened, or bribed not to tell. In some instances the child is killed.

Phase 3 - Secrecy: Pedophiles need control over their victims. Once the child has been placed in a vulnerable and compromising situation, sexually or otherwise, the offender then obtains the necessary control over the child by threatening exposure or blaming the child for what took place.



"The offender knows that the child feels guilty and is wrought by shame. The offender also knows that most children have very little self-esteem or confidence and they feel helpless in the situation they are in....A deep concern of many children who have a close relationship with the offender is the fear of being taken away, out of the family situation....The only time a threat becomes necessary is to keep the child quiet and to continue participating in the activities which the offender desires....Threats are made that imply negative consequences for both the victim and the offender if there is disclosure." (Not My Child, J. Wagner, 1994).

Because of the taboo nature of pedophilia, secrecy plays a large role in the seduction process. Rarely is the child threatened with harm if he/she doesn't comply with the sexual demands. Often the child victim is showered with countless gifts prior to the sexual act or is pleasantly surprised after having cooperated with the offender. The pedophile will do everything in their powers to keep the secrecy phase camouflaged and under control. Disclosure (Phase 4) is his greatest concern.

Phase 4 - Disclosure and the rupture of the relationship : The 'telling' stage is an extremely difficult phase for the child victim. To muster up the much needed courage to tell someone about being an abuse victim is not always easy. He or she has a host of internal feelings and obstacles that must be conquered in order for them to expose what has happened.

"Before a child will talk to someone, they must climb a mountain of overwhelming feelings. Fear of not being believed, fear of losing love, fear of losing an important caretaker, fear of physical threats, fear of abandonment, misguided guilt about causing or deserving the mistreatment, doubts about what will happen, confusion over ambivalent feelings about the abuser." (Kids & Company -Teacher's Guide).

Most of these victims not only do not disclose their victimization, but they strongly deny it happened to them when confronted (male offender and victim - stigma of homosexuality - he risks ridicule by his peers). They may not realize they are victims until the offender kicks them out, dumps them once he has found a younger boy. They quickly realize all the attention, affection, and gifts that were

showered upon them were just part of the master plan to use and exploit them. For a troubled child who has had a traumatic life, this may be the final and decisive blow. Jealousy and reality strikes them hard. When an occasional victim does come forward and report a molesting relationship, it is usually because he is jealous and angry at the offender for 'dumping' him.

Disclosure by the abused child is either made accidentally or intentionally. Once the disclosure is made and the proper authorities (Youth Protection and local police force) are informed, the relationship is ruptured and we now enter the final phase, depression.

Phase 5 - Depression : Once the child has been 'dumped' by the offender and has confided in a trusted adult or the relationship has been accidentally uncovered, we usually enter a phase of self-doubt, guilt and depression. Typical reactions include: impatience, unusual displays of anger, fear of certain people or locations, a sense of helplessness, lack of control over one's life, etc. To take the first steps on the road to becoming a survivor takes guts and a lot of tender loving care from the child's entourage. Throughout this depression stage, the abusive relationship will be the primary thought in the victim's mind.

"Frightening experiences will shake up all children in the beginning, but some will bounce back quickly, while others will take longer. Some may become so seriously distressed they need special help. Parents must keep in mind that children at risk, those who have faced bad situations, will benefit most from help and understanding." (How To Raise a Street Smart Child, Hechinger, 1985).



"It is not the victim's fault even if the victim did not say no, did not resist, did not tell, or even enjoyed the activity." (Child Molesters, NCMEC, 1992).



After identification, the pedophile on the other hand will come up with an array of excuses and defenses in order to clear himself of the situation. Here are the predictable reactions by the child molester:

1. **Denial :** Usually the first reaction is complete or partial denial (doesn't remember or admits to an act but denies the intent was sexual gratification). He might act shocked, surprised, or even incensed by the allegations of sexual activity with children. Once discovered, this denial reaction may be backed up by his relatives, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

2. **Minimization** : Even with overwhelming evidence against the offender, he may attempt to minimize what has been done, both in quantity and quality (i.e., "It only took place on one occasion;" "I only hugged the boy"). He might admit to certain acts that he knows are lesser offenses or misdemeanors in order to get a lighter sentence. Victims sometimes also go through this minimization phase by denying certain sexual acts in spite of photographs, videos that show otherwise.
3. **Justification** : The offenders try to justify their behavior by generally pointing the finger at the victim: i.e., "It was the child who wanted such a relationship;" "She seduced me;" "My kid is better off learning about sex from me than in the street;" "I was under tremendous stress at work and I started drinking."
4. **Fabrication** : The really clever child molesters with fertile imaginations generally come up with some of the more creative stories to explain their behavior i.e., a doctor claimed he was doing research on male youth prostitution; a professor claimed he was doing research on pedophilia and collecting and distributing child pornography for scientific research; a father claimed he was providing sex education for his children by teaching his daughters the difference between good and bad touches.
5. **Mental illness** : Once the offender has either been identified or arrested he may try to feign mental illness but not until other tactics have failed.
6. **Sympathy** : If all else fails, he then expresses deep regret for what took place and introduces as evidence his good character and dedication to his family and society - "I'm a nice guy with many personal problems." This is where such nonsense as: "I'm a pillar of the community;" "I've never had prior arrests;" "I'm a church leader and a devoted family man," "I do volunteer work at the local abuse center," etc., are used by the offender as defense but in fact these excuses had greatly facilitated the child molester's ability in the past to access and seduce children.
7. **Attack** : The offender may use such tactics as harassment, threats, or bribery of victims, witnesses and co-workers.
8. **Guilty, but not guilty** : The offender will often try to plea bargain and make some sort of a deal in order to avoid a public trial and mass media coverage. He may try to plead not guilty by reason of insanity but when confronted with overwhelming evidence he will then prefer to plead guilty to charges with ambiguous names so that the public following the case will not know what this child molester really did. The worst thing that can happen to the offender is for all the abusive details to come out in court.