



London Abused
Women's Centre

**Sex Trafficking & Sexual Exploitation:
Keeping Youth Safe**



A Resource for Young Women and Girls

The London Abused Women's Centre (LAWC)

About LAWC

The London Abused Women's Centre (LAWC) provides women and girls over the age of 12 who have been abused, tortured, harassed and/or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner, sex buyer, sex trafficker or anyone within the workplace with immediate access to long term woman-centred, trauma informed counselling, support and advocacy.

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by sexual exploitation and trafficking. The London Abused Women's Centre recognizes that boys and men may also be victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. However, the majority of victims are girls and women, and the majority of pimps and traffickers are men, and this is reflected in the language of this package.

Contact LAWC

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Fax: (519) 679-3918

Email: info@lawc.on.ca

Twitter: [@endwomanabuse](https://twitter.com/endwomanabuse)

Facebook: facebook.com/endwomanabuse

If you are being sex trafficked and/or sexually exploited and need support,
contact LAWC today.



This Is Important

This package contains information for women and girls about sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. The purpose is to create awareness and educate YOU - young women and girls - and your families and friends on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This package can be used as a resource for you if you think you or someone you know might currently be, or is at risk of, being trafficked.

Women and girls between the ages 12 to 21 are at the highest risk of being a victim of sex trafficking.

The information in this package is not intended to scare you, but to prepare you. This guide will provide you with the knowledge you need to prepare and protect yourself from sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.

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The last page in this package contains contact information for local agencies who provide support and services to youth who have been victims of sex trafficking and/or sexual exploitation and their families.

What is Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation?

Sex Trafficking:

is the recruiting, transportation, harbouring and/or exchange of a person by another, with the use of force, coercion or threat, for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.

ACT of	by MEANS of	for the PURPOSE of
Recruitment Transportation Transfer Harbouring Receipt of Persons	Threat or use of force Coercion Abduction Fraud Deception Abuse of power Abuse of position of vulnerability Giving/receiving material benefit	Sexual Exploitation in the sex trade (prostitution, pornography, massage parlour, strip club)

Sexual Exploitation:

Is when an adult abuses the vulnerability of a child/youth and uses them for sexual purposes

. This is child sexual abuse and includes the exchange of any sexual services for money, drugs,



No child under the age of 18 can consent to any exploitative act.

Can this happen to me?

It is hard to imagine this happening to you or your friends and family. However, the reality is that all young women and girls are at risk, and that includes you.

The media and public has created the assumption that sex trafficking occurs internationally across borders and that Canadian women/girls are not at risk of being exploited/trafficked. **The majority of sex trafficking in Canada is domestic and victims are primarily Canadian born.**

Recognizing that this does happen in our own towns and cities and protecting ourselves from is very important.

Debunking the Myths about Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

Myth #1: If the victim is not moved across an international border, it is not sex trafficking

Trafficking can, but does not have to involve the crossing of any international borders or far distances. The definition of sex trafficking includes transportation as a possible element, however it is not a necessary part. A woman or girl can be sex trafficked in her own town or city. In fact, the majority of sex trafficking victims in Canada are Canadian citizens and are trafficked within Canada.

Myth #2: ONLY the most vulnerable women and girls get trafficked

Certain groups of people are undeniably more vulnerable to becoming trafficking victims. The majority of those who sell their own sexual services are women and girls. Marginalized groups, such as Aboriginal women and girls, are disproportionately represented. Women and girls living in poverty, those who are homeless, and members of the LGBT2Q+ communities are also at risk. However, this does not mean that women and girls who do not fit into these categories are not at risk. All women and girls are at risk. Pimps/traffickers target women and girls at any location and of any social status. There are many cases where girls and young women are lured directly from their school, job or nightclub.

Myth #3: There must be an element of physical force or restraint for a situation to be identified as sex trafficking.

While force is definitely a component of sex trafficking, it is not required that the force be physical. In sex trafficking cases, the psychological force, through manipulation, threat and fear, is just as strong, perhaps even stronger than the physical force applied to a victim.

Myth #4: Sex Trafficking victims will tell others of their victimization and reach out for help.

A victim of sex trafficking will not usually tell others of their victimization, and will often go to extreme lengths to avoid anyone finding out. This is due in part to the fact that the victim has been so manipulated by the pimp/trafficker that they don't actually even see themselves as being victims, or they live in constant fear or shame about others finding out. In some cases, the pimps/traffickers threaten the victim, their loved ones, friends and pets if they tell anyone about their victimization. The threats are violent and can include threats of murder. Regardless of the reasons sex trafficking victims are not likely to notify others and will not often ask for help. This is why it is important for others to recognize the signs.

No person can consent to being trafficked. Even if the victim claims to consent to being trafficked, trafficking is illegal in Canada and consent is irrelevant to charging traffickers. It is important to note that no one under the age of 18 cannot consent to any sexual act that is exploitative in nature.

MYTH



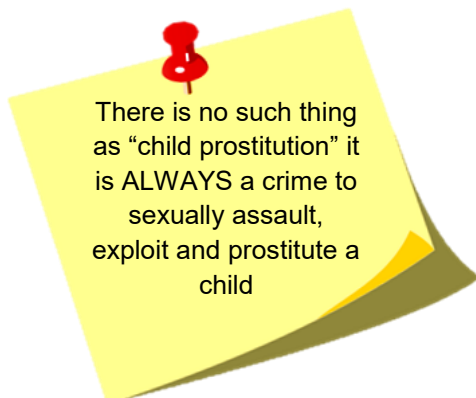
FACT

What is “the Game?” Who are the Players?

“The Game” is the term used to describe the prostitution and sex trafficking subculture. The game is compete with rules, levels of authority, differential roles and even a training manual for pimps. Pimps/Traffickers often use one of a number of websites to advertise and sell the sexual services of women and girls. It is illegal in Canada for third party advertising. the sexual services of a woman or girl.

The Players

<p><u>Sexual Services Defined</u></p> <p>The following are sexual services and illegal in Canada if provided in return for some form of consideration: lap-dancing, masturbating a sex buyer, sexually stimulating and gratifying sado-masochistic activities, acts provided in a private room that are sexual in nature but do not involve physical contact between such as self-masturbation.</p>	<p><u>Trafficker/Pimp</u></p> <p>Trafficker and pimp are interchangeable terms. Traffickers/pimps lure, transport and transfer victims for the purpose of sexually exploiting and prostituting them. Traffickers/pimps recruit victims through coercion, manipulation, violence and exploitation their vulnerabilities. They may act on their own or with extensive criminal networks.</p>
<p><u>Sex Purchasers/johns</u></p> <p>Sex purchasers/johns are usually men who pay women and girls who are prostituted, trafficked and/or sexually exploited to provide sexual services. Sex purchasers/johns create the <u>demand</u> for prostitution, trafficking and sexual exploitation. Sex purchasing is illegal in Canada.</p>	<p><u>Bottom Bitch</u></p> <p>The term bottom bitch refers to women and girls who have been victimized themselves in the game and who are elevated in status by their trafficker to a recruiter and sometimes manager. They often agree to be the recruiter in a effort to avoid continued exploitation.</p>
<p><u>Sex Trafficked Women and Girls</u></p> <p>They are the women and girls who are trafficked, prostituted and sexually exploited. Women and girls in the game are forced and coerced into <u>supplying</u> sexual services.</p>	

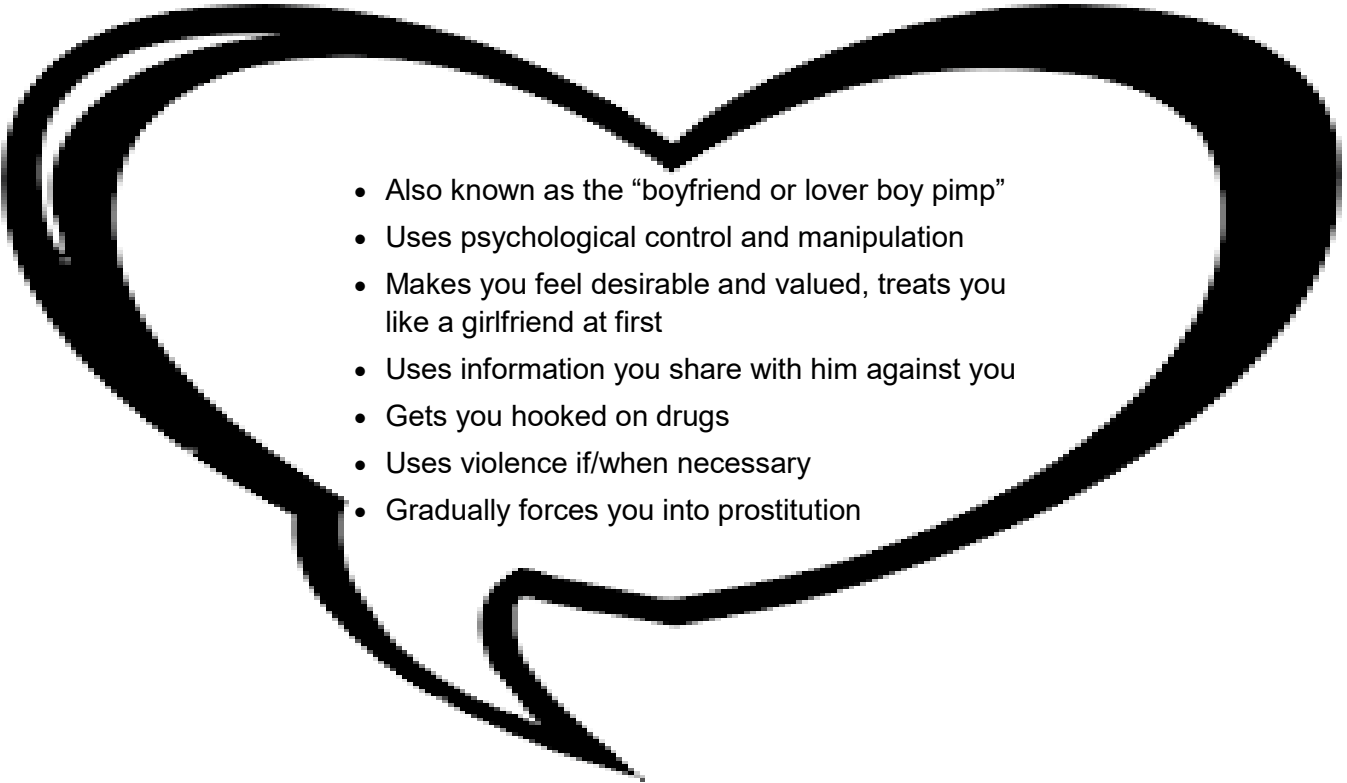


Red Flags of Traffickers and Pimps

The following red flags will help you identify some of the common tactics used by a trafficker/pimp to lure women and girls. Being aware can help prevent you and/or someone you know from being lured. Be aware of the red flags and use them to avoid these predators.

- ❗ Promises an amazing future together and possible job opportunities at a new location
- ❗ Extremely over the top with flattery and compliments, professes his love right away
- ❗ Constant gift giving and spoiling, buys your affection
- ❗ Pushes boundaries, including sexual boundaries
- ❗ Isolates you from family, friends and activities
- ❗ Has lots of money that cannot be explained and does not match his job
- ❗ Manipulates and coerces you into doing things you do not want to do
- ❗ Introduces and encourages you to use substances including highly addictive illegal drugs like heroin and cocaine
- ❗ Questions you about your family and learns a lot about you but does not share anything about himself
- ❗ Tries to impress you with money, status and connections

Romeo Pimp

- 
- Also known as the “boyfriend or lover boy pimp”
 - Uses psychological control and manipulation
 - Makes you feel desirable and valued, treats you like a girlfriend at first
 - Uses information you share with him against you
 - Gets you hooked on drugs
 - Uses violence if/when necessary
 - Gradually forces you into prostitution

Who is at Risk?

All women and girls are at risk of being trafficked and sexually exploited because of their gender.

In our patriarchal society, women and girls are sexualized and commodified. Men believe it is acceptable to purchase sexual services from women and girls for their own sexual gratification. This creates an increased demand for prostituted, trafficked and sexually exploited girls and women. To meet the increased demand the supply of available women and girls has to increase. The supply of available women and girls is often made available by traffickers and pimps.

Certain groups are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking and sexual exploitation:

Young Girls (12-21)

LGBT2Q+ Youth

Indigenous Girls and Women

Young Girls

The average age of recruitment into prostitution is 13-14 years old. In our patriarchal society, the bodies of girls are **sexualized** and **objectified** at a young age. This has led to men increasingly demanding paid access to girls' bodies, placing young girls at **higher risk** of being trafficked and sexually exploited into the commercial sex trade.

Youth/teen years can be difficult particularly on girls who experience a decline in self-worth. Youth and teen girls are experiencing physical changes while trying to maintain the image that society has imposed on them, namely to be sexually desirable to boys and men. Traffickers and pimps prey on these insecurities by making girls feel beautiful, worthy and "sexy."

Traffickers and pimps also prey on the naiveté and the inability of young girls to fully understand the risks of daily life. Many youth believe they know a lot more about the dangers in the world than they do. Additionally, girls and young women may be experiencing a time of **conflict** and **experimentation** where they may be in conflict with friends, parents and teachers. They may be challenging their boundaries and the values they have been taught. This may lead them to want to escape their life and/or try new things. All of these factors increase their vulnerability to trafficking.

The average age of recruitment into the commercialized sex trade is 13-14 years old.

The media plays a powerful role in teaching girls that their primary worth comes from being sexually desirable to men.

LGBT2Q+ Youth

LGBT2Q+ youth are at higher risk of being trafficked or sexually exploited as a result of their

Being over-representation in the homeless community.

LGBT2Q+ youth experience homelessness at disproportionately high rates as a result of oppression and discrimination in society and in their homes. Societal homophobia and transphobia, family rejection, bullying in school and exposure to violence are all forces that drive LGBT2Q+ youth away from their everyday lives and onto the streets.

Pimps and traffickers prey on LGBT2Q+ homeless youth as they lack many of life's necessities...

...love, shelter, food, money, family, sense of belonging and acceptance.

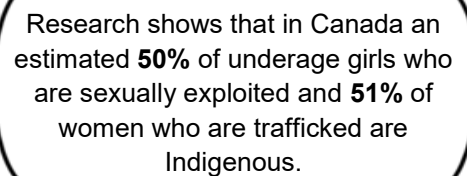
The **stigma** that the LGBT2Q+ community is subjected may lead to continued exploitation as it prevents victims reaching out for help.

Indigenous Girls

Indigenous girls are at the **highest risk** of being trafficked and sexually exploited. The high risk level can be attributed to the history of **colonization** and **marginalization** that Indigenous Peoples have been subjected to. A legacy of inequality exists for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, leading to high rates of poverty, violence, suicide, male violence against women, substance use and an overrepresentation of children in the child welfare system.

Indigenous girls are especially vulnerable to victimization and may be targeted at younger ages. Traffickers will prey on their vulnerabilities, and often promise a better life, opportunity and an escape from the abuse and poverty they live in. Traffickers will offer food, shelter, alcohol and drugs, and a sense of belonging and family that may be missing in her life. Traffickers are known to target Indigenous girls wanting to move away from their communities for a better life knowing they feel isolated, alone and in need of resources.

The continuance of **racist stereotypes** of Indigenous girls also contributes to heightened victimization. These stereotypes suggest that Indigenous girls are sexually available and have normalized sexual abuse and violence against Indigenous women and girls. A higher rate of sexual abuse against Indigenous girls makes it easier to lure them into the commercial sex trade because the girls themselves begin to perceive sexual violence as an expected and normal part of their adolescent and adult lives.



Research shows that in Canada an estimated **50%** of underage girls who are sexually exploited and **51%** of women who are trafficked are Indigenous.

Indigenous girls are trafficked and exploited at younger ages. The average age of recruitment of Indigenous girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation is 11-12

Where do Traffickers/Pimps Recruit?

Anywhere you find women and girls you will find traffickers/pimps

Young girls have documented being recruited on a variety of **websites and apps**, as well as at **schools, malls, parks, parties, clubs, transportation stops and terminals, youth shelters, group homes and youth detention centres.**

Online Risk

The risk of being recruited online is increasing as the use of technology by youth increases. Traffickers use social media sites to contact and lure girls into trafficking. Traffickers may examine social media pages, looking for posts that show loneliness and vulnerabilities. Posts that suggest girls are in conflict with family and/or friends or who show they are thinking of moving out are red flags for traffickers/pimps.

Social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, and dating apps like Tinder and Plenty of Fish give traffickers/pimps lots of opportunity to target youth.

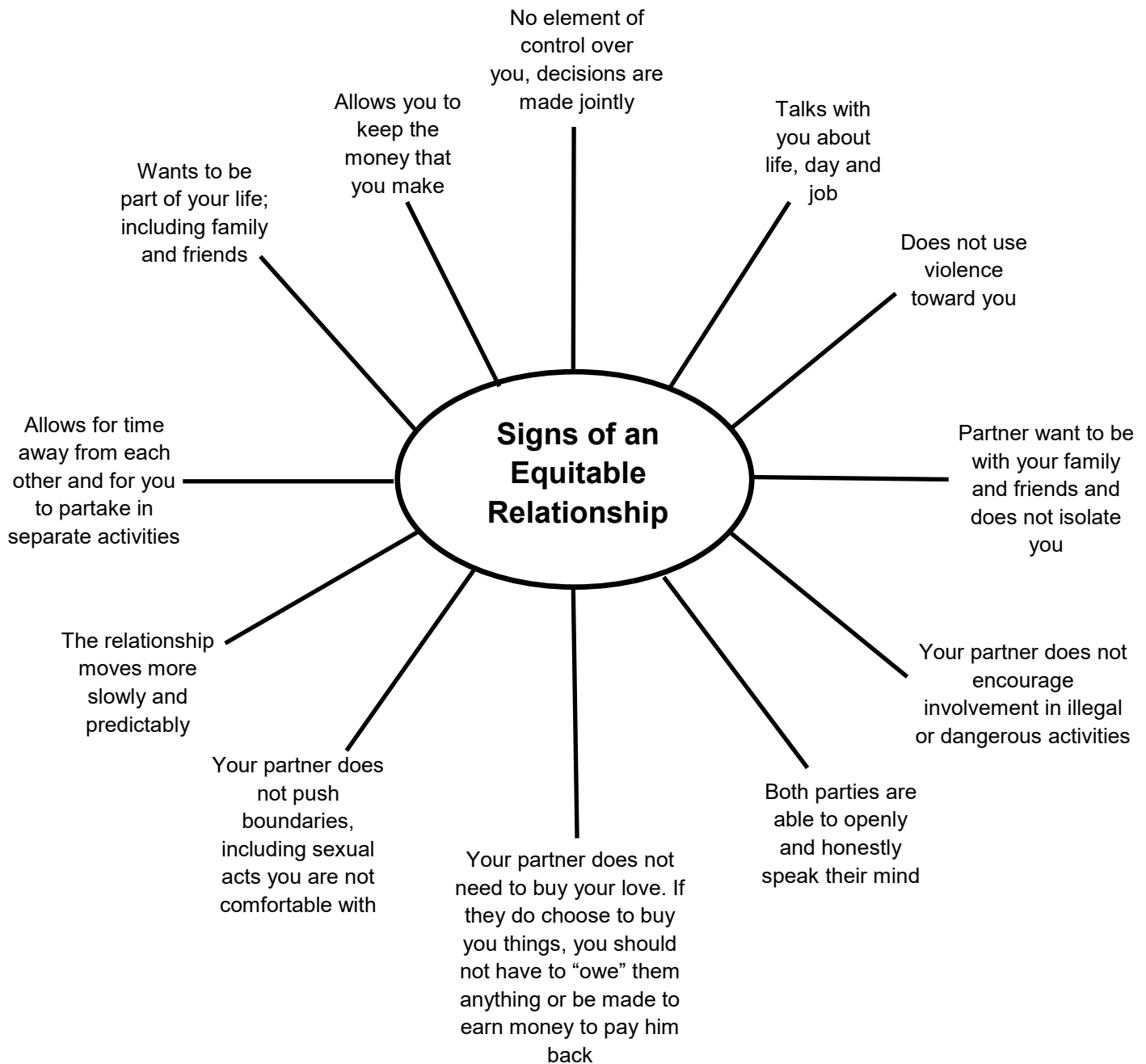


Minimizing Online Risk

- Turn off location services
- Do not engage in conversations or allow people to 'follow' or 'friend' you if you do not know them
- If you are uncomfortable with a conversation online, screenshot it, block the person and tell an adult
- Use privacy settings so that only people you allow may view your profile
- Do not share photos or videos that are personal and that you may regret in the future.
- Do not believe everyone or everything you see online. You may not be speaking to the person you think you are.

Signs of an Equitable Relationship

It may be difficult for you to recognize someone as a pimp rather than a boyfriend. Romeo or Lover Boy pimps will present themselves as a boyfriend to gain the affection and trust of the girl they are targeting. This list identifies traits that a partner in an **equitable** and **non-exploitative** relationship would exhibit. This list can be used to assess your own relationships to determine if your relationship may be putting you at risk.



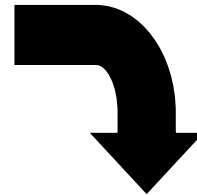
How are Girls Victimized and Exploited by Traffickers/ Pimps in the Commercial Sex Industry?



CONTACT

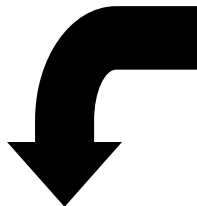
IN PERSON: Traffickers/pimps will try to make contact with girls and young women anywhere they can be found. This includes: schools, malls, parks, transit stops and stations, group homes, youth shelters, youth detention centers and bars.

ONLINE: Contact may also be made through social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and dating apps like Plenty of Fish and Tinder.



LURING, BY THE ROMEO PIMP

The most common way girls are lured is through the promise of love and a better life. Pimps/traffickers will spend time getting to know girls and young women, gathering information about their lives and showering them with attention and gifts to gain their trust. Girls and young women believe he is her boyfriend.



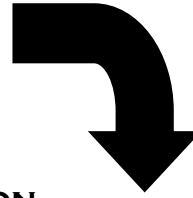
LURING, BY THE “BOTTOM BITCH”

In other situations, pimps/traffickers will utilize “bottom bitches,” who are women/girls who have been victimized themselves. To avoid continued victimization, the bottom bitch will assist her trafficker in recruiting other women and girls. The bottom bitch will befriend girls, earn their trust and then convince or coerce them into joining the game. She will likely use threats, empty promises and/or glamorize the lifestyle to entice girls and young women into the game. A bottom bitch is beneficial to the pimps/traffickers because her involvement as the recruiter minimizes the chances that the pimps/traffickers will be charged themselves with criminal offences relating to recruitment for the purpose of prostitution.

Grooming & Isolation

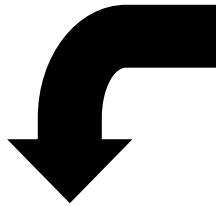
PSYCHOLOGICAL ISOLATION

Once the pimp/trafficker has gained the trust of a girl or woman a number of tactics will be used to isolate her and prepare her for exploitation. This may include convincing the girl/woman that her family does not love her, her friends cannot be trusted or that she must spend all her time with the pimp/trafficker to prove she love him. The pimp/trafficker will convince her that he/she is the only one who cares about her.



PHYSICAL ISOLATION

Other times, a pimp/trafficker may force or convince a girl or woman to leave town with him. He may say it is for a party or that it's a way for her to start a new life with the trafficker. Removing the girl from her supports and taking her to an unfamiliar place makes her dependent on the pimp/trafficker



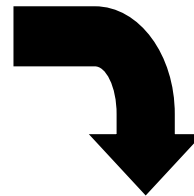
EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Pimp/traffickers also use tactics of emotional abuse to control victims. This may be by sending mixed messages, which make you feel beautiful and loved one minute, and worthless and ugly the next.

Turning Out

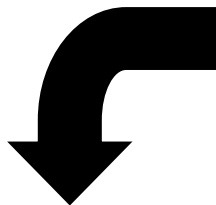
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The pimp will tell the girl or woman she needs to make money to pay the trafficker back for gifts he's given her. He may lie to her and tell her he's lost his job and they will have to move if she doesn't start paying for expenses. He may bring his friends over and force you to provide sexual services. Or, he will drop you off on a street with no coat, purse, ID or phone and tell you he'll be back in an hour and she better make money.



DENIAL OF BASIC NEEDS

Victims are denied basic needs such as food, sleep and medical attention. All their rights are removed and she will not be able to do anything with the pimp/traffickers permission. The only contacts she has is with him, sex purchasers and others in the game. She will realize that providing sexual services is mandatory.



MAINTENANCE OF CONTROL

The pimp/trafficker will take away her identification and give her no money to ensure she cannot leave. It is also common for pimps to introduce and provide drugs and alcohol to girls to keep them up long hours to serve men and to keep them depended on the pimp. She will face beatings and violence and threats of violence against her family if she tries to leave.

Warning Signs of Victimization

These are some of the main indicators of a girl trafficked into the commercial sex trade. If you know a classmate, friend or family member with these indicators tell an adult immediately.

Isolation, distancing self from old friends, activities and school

Pimps/traffickers take the victim away from her support network so that it is easier to control her. The girl may not have the time or energy to maintain interest in school or other activities. She may quit her job.

Loss of Identification, but may have fake ID

Pimps/traffickers often take away victims identification in an effort to strip their identity and prevent them from having the means to leave. However, she may have a fake ID of someone who is older.

Substance Use

Drug and alcohol use is common among trafficked youth. Pimps and traffickers provide substances as a way to recruit and control their victims.

Receiving expensive and unexplained gifts

She is receiving or buying clothing/accessories that you know she cannot afford. She is attending expensive spas and hair salons.

Unexplained absences from home and school

If she is missing time from home or school and is spending her time with her new boyfriend that her family hasn't met.

Signs of abuse

She shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse

Active Cellphone use

Pimps/traffickers may provide the girl with a second cellphone that he and other men contact her on. She may be very active on her phone, not wanting to miss any messages or calls.

Nervousness, inconsistent stories and lying

She does not want to tell you where she has been or who she is hanging out with. Her stories are not adding up and you can tell she is not telling you the truth about something. She may be nervous and defensive when asked questions.

Entering/Exiting Strangers Cars

This is high risk, and an indication that she may be being picked up by pimps or johns.



How to Protect Yourself from Victimization

Know and be able to recognize the red flags of pimps and traffickers

Never meet with someone you do not know without asking parents/guardians first

Decline suspicious offers, and screenshot and block conversations that make you uncomfortable

Do not reveal too much personal information about self, online or in person

Enable privacy setting on all social media accounts, and only allow people you know to follow/friend you

Do not accept expensive gifts or dates from a stranger

Do not trade sexual favours for money or something of value

Always let a few trusted people, friends or family, know where you are and who you are with at all times

Maintain good relationships with friends, family and school

If you suspect that you may be being lured/groomed, or that the person you are involved with might be a pimp or trafficker, trust your instincts and notify an adult immediately.

Agencies that can Help

London Abused Women's Centre & Salvation Army Correctional Justice Services; Choices Program:

- The Choices Program provides women and girls **over 12**, who have been or are being prostituted or sex trafficked with trauma-informed counselling and advocacy, safety planning, referrals, family support, support groups and outreach services
- To make an appointment for counselling, call 519-432-220;
- For outreach services, call, 226-378-1814



Giving Hope Today

Youth Opportunities Unlimited; Youth in Transition Program:

- Aims to support youth, including those who have been sex trafficked, to transition from the child welfare sector into adulthood. Counsellors will work with youth to develop and achieve goals centered on; housing, education, employment, life skills, legal and health and mental health services. Youth will be guided between these services and set up with lasting supports into adulthood.
- Program is available to youth ages **16-24** who have been a Crown Ward with the Children's Aid Society whether they are currently involved or not. For youth who have also been sex trafficked, they may also access a Youth Development Counsellor who specializes in this area
- Call: 519-432-1112



Victim Services of London/Middlesex; Victim Quick Response Program for Victims of Human Trafficking:

- Provides financial assistance in order to lessen the impact of crime, enhance safety, and meet practical needs. Can provide financial assistance for human trafficking victims, their immediate family and witnesses, to help cover expenses such as: residential needs, travel, safety, counselling, personal and practical assistance.
- Available to those who have experienced human trafficking within the last 12 months.
- Applicants under the age of 16 will need a parent or guardian to apply on their behalf.
- Call: 519-661-5636



