

A PROGRAM AND SERVICE OF
THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RISK RETENTION GROUP, INC.



Grooming: Psychological, Physical and Community

"The best thing we can do for our children is to love them, support them and keep them safe from harm and abuse. Anything other than that should be considered a failure."

The Protecting God's Children program highlights three important tactics that child abusers employ to get closer to children so that they can molest them, called grooming techniques. It is important to be aware of grooming so as to avoid situations that place you and the children in your care in danger. We watch and observe the behaviors of child abusers so that we can understand how they operate and what they do to get close to families and children. What we have found includes three categories of grooming: physical, psychological and community grooming.



Grooming is best defined as the "predatory act of maneuvering another individual into a position that makes them more isolated, dependent, likely to trust, and more vulnerable to abusive behavior."

Victims of grooming can be anyone—children, adults and even the most savvy and sophisticated among us. We all think we are super aware of our surroundings and interactions, but those who employ grooming techniques are highly in tune with tricking us into believing that their intentions are pure. Without training, we don't realize what has happened until it is way too late. This article will highlight ways in which you can heighten your awareness and put yourself in a better position to defend against any possible abuser. Keep in mind that it is difficult, and that hindsight is always 20/20.

Let's look at a non-related, but true example to illustrate what can happen to innocent people: A couple is selling some furniture through a reputable website. They get an offer from someone who calls and says they are out of town, but really want the furniture. They are coming into town in a week, but would you please hold the furniture for them. To solidify the deal, they will send you a bank check for the items. You agree and are enthused that you found a buyer. In a few days, a bank check arrives for a couple of hundred more than the cost of the items. You contact the buyer and inform them, and they tell you how sorry they are to have made an error. They tell you to please deposit the check or cash it and you can give them the cash overpayment when they come to pick up the furniture. You do so, and in a couple of days someone comes, picks up the furniture, and you hand them two-hundred dollars. Successful deal! Until the bank calls and informs you that the very realistic bank check that you deposited into your account is a fraud! It happens all the time.

We are all vulnerable, because our inclination is to accept the assistance of others and to believe in the good intentions of our fellow human beings. Abusers target anyone and manipulate others into thinking that their seemingly good behavior, is, in fact, good. However, it is bad behavior disguised as good.

Grooming is an insidious, predatory tactic, utilized by abusers. Grooming is practiced by Narcissists, Antisocial predators, con-artists and sexual aggressors, who target and manipulate vulnerable people for exploitation. Child grooming is the deliberate act of establishing an emotional bond with a child, to lower the child's resistance. Child grooming can result in the minor falling victim to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, or specifically, to manipulate children into participating in slave labor, prostitution, and/or the production of child pornography.

In the same way, adults are groomed so that perpetrators can have closer access to their children or the children under their care. Perpetrators get into the lives of the people in the targeted child's life and apply the same psychological manipulation to all in the circle.

Physical grooming: Abusers touch in ways that appear innocent at first, and slowly progress to touch the child sexually. They build a bond with the child by gaining trust and a closeness that the child accepts as totally sincere. They manipulate the child to see the touch as harmless, yet it is a totally calculating process engaged by the molester which leads to sexual abuse.

Psychological grooming: The abuser uses all kinds of manipulation to make children feel special: time, attention, flattery, gifts, etc., to name a few. They make the child feel special, chosen and flattered. All the while, the perpetrator moves closer to the goal of molesting the child. Self-disclosures from abusers have denoted that they say what they are doing is helpful, kind and caring and thus, the child often does as well.

Community grooming: Abusers groom the community into believing that their intentions are pure and good. They make themselves present to parents, families and communities by volunteering, donating goods and money, time and any other

number of things so that people think they are a wonderful asset. Everyone thinks they have good intentions and no one believes that they would harm a child.

Perpetrators connect with their victims. They forge special connections that create a world where secrets are kept and emotional, intellectual and spiritual boundaries are blurred and confused. Children and the adults in their life are prey to grooming. Everything always appears, looks, seems, sounds and feels good in the beginning. And then, it turns ugly where guilt and shame are operative, and a child has to deal with the wounds that can last for many years. The shame and guilt propel a life of secrecy where it remains in darkness until brought somehow to the light.

Be on guard! Be aware! There certainly may be plenty of folks in your life who are wonderful and helpful. But, be careful of anyone coming into your life who seems too good to be true, because it could be exactly that.

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1) Grooming can happen physically, emotionally and psychologically to:

- A) Coaches, Scout leaders, crossing guards and corner store owners.
 - B) Children in their neighborhoods, in schools, at the playground or on the Internet.
 - C) Your child's grandparents and their neighbors of the apartment complex where your child visits.
 - D) A principal, teachers and staff in a school setting.
 - E) All of the above.
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