

It's Time to about sex trafficking.

T.A.L.K.



Sex trafficking is a complex issue - one that far too many Canadians ignore because they think it only happens to people they don't know in other countries. Unfortunately, human trafficking touches every community in Canada and it can affect you or someone you love.

We created this document because concerned family and friends make up the second largest group of people reaching out to us through the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline. Many of them have no idea what to do or say if they think someone they love is being trafficked or at risk of being exploited. In fact, very few Canadians do. Providing communities with the tools to start these vital but sensitive conversations is critical to addressing human trafficking because knowledge is power. Learning more about sex trafficking and having open and honest dialogue about it can make a difference.

This document was created in consultation with survivors of sex trafficking. Our Advisory Group of People with Lived Experience generously shared their insight, knowledge and expertise. We thank them for their support and guidance.

At The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, we have a vision for a strong Canada without sex trafficking. In order to eradicate it, we need to talk about the realities. We hope this document helps. If you suspect that you, or someone you know, may be being exploited, or if you want to learn more or access support, please call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia Drydyk".

Julia Drydyk

Executive Director

The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

It's time to "T.A.L.K."

**Here are four crucial steps
to starting a conversation
about sex trafficking:**

- T** – Teach yourself about sex trafficking
- A** – Approach the conversation with care
- L** – Listen and adapt
- K** – Know there is help available

Our research* shows Canadians want and need resources to talk about sex trafficking:

- 97% of those surveyed feel that Canadians have a duty to help youth protect themselves against sex trafficking
- 95% of Canadians feel we need more tools to better understand sex trafficking in Canada
- 85% of those surveyed would like to help end sex trafficking in Canada but don't know where to start

The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking operates the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, a confidential, multi-lingual service available 24/7.

If you suspect that you or someone you know may be being exploited, if you want to access support, or if you want to learn more, call **1-833-900-1010** or reach out via chat at www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca

Teach

Yourself About Sex Trafficking

There is a lot of misinformation circulating about sex trafficking. Learning about the realities allows you to have better conversations and helps build informed communities, which will ultimately help prevent sex trafficking and make a difference to survivors exiting their situation.

Here are a few facts:

- The process of sex trafficking a person is not usually how it's portrayed in the movies or on social media. Victims are rarely kidnapped by a stranger; they are most often manipulated by someone they know and trust.
- Sex trafficking touches all Canadian communities. It is a nationwide issue.
- Victims of sex trafficking in Canada are most often from within Canada.
- While it can happen to anyone, young women are most likely to be targeted by traffickers.
- People can experience sex trafficking in different ways, and every situation is unique.
- Not everyone who engages in the commercial sex industry is being trafficked. Sex trafficking is when someone is convincing, controlling, or manipulating another person into providing sexual services for money. People who are being trafficked have little to no control over how many 'clients' they see and what types of sexual services they have to provide, and they often must give their earnings to the trafficker. People who sell sex independently can choose who they engage with, what sexual services they provide and how much they charge. They get to keep the money they make.



The Calculated Stages of Trafficking

People don't "choose" to be sex trafficked. They are often exploited by someone they know and trust like a boyfriend, friend, or family member. Manipulation is a multi-faceted, comprehensive process that evolves across different stages. It usually doesn't happen overnight. It's often an insidious process that breaks down a person's autonomy, self-control and self-worth.

Sex trafficking can happen to anyone in a variety of ways. The following stages suggest how someone might be targeted by a "Romeo Pimp" i.e. a trafficker who poses as a boyfriend or love interest. While common, this doesn't necessarily capture the nuances of all experiences of sex trafficking:

Luring - This is the research stage. Traffickers use online groups and social media apps to identify potential victims or they may scope out malls, schools, community centres, etc. They are personable and gather key information about the individual they are seeking to exploit, looking for vulnerabilities such as a desire for love, security, belonging, money, basic needs (i.e. shelter, food, clothing) or to simply feel good about themselves. They may also seek out those with addictions or substance use issues.

Grooming - Whatever the person they are targeting needs, the trafficker delivers. This is often called “The Honeymoon Stage” because the Romeo Pimp is determined to make the intended victim fall in love with them. “Love bombing” may include expensive gifts, fancy dinners, over-the-top romance, promises of a better future and a life together. Whatever it takes to build trust and dependence.

Manipulation or Coercion - Once the victim is fully invested and committed to the relationship, the mind games begin. The trafficker toys with their emotions and manipulates their relationship. The trafficker isolates their victim from family and friends, emotionally and/or physically. The person being targeted is only rewarded with affection when they comply with ever-increasing demands, such as sexual acts that may make them uncomfortable. If they do as they’re asked, they get attention. The trafficker may even insist they owe money. If anything is questioned, it is answered with threats of violence or using personal information against the victim.

Exploitation - By this stage, a person’s self-esteem and independence has been taken away from them. They may have little to no control over anything in their lives – who they see or talk to, when they can eat or sleep, where they go. They are coerced to perform sexual acts with others in exchange for money and the trafficker takes all or most of this money. It may be difficult for those who are being exploited to leave the situation for a number of reasons: they may have a trauma bond (an emotional attachment that develops from a cyclical pattern of abuse); the trafficker may be threatening violence against loved ones; and/or those being exploited may not feel they have people or a life to return to. Because of this intense manipulation, those being trafficked may not realize they are being trafficked and may believe they consented. In fact, individuals may push back at the suggestion that they are being exploited/trafficked.

Recruitment of Others - Sometimes sex trafficking victims become recruiters. Helping lure others may be a survival measure, or they may be threatened or forced into recruiting others. When a victim acts as a recruiter, exiting becomes even harder due to fear of being seen as a perpetrator of the crime.

Some Warning Signs

It's important to know the signs of sex trafficking. No single indicator proves someone is being trafficked, but a combination of these should raise red flags to start a conversation:

- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Isolation by a new romantic interest or friend
- New, expensive things and a lifestyle that is hard to account for or explain
- Involvement in a fast-moving relationship with a large difference in age or financial status

For more warning signs, click [here](#).

Online Safety

Online chat rooms (i.e. in gaming platforms) and social media apps are commonly used by traffickers to target individuals. Learn more and share online safety tips with those you care about. These may include: not sharing personal information online; not accepting gifts online; knowing that live conversations can be screenshot; and not meeting an online acquaintance in real life without telling someone you trust. Be particularly wary of those who want to advance a relationship very quickly or if a situation seems too good to be true. Trust your gut and teach others to trust their instincts.

For more information on online safety, please see the Resources section at the end of this document.

For more information about sex trafficking visit
[The Canadian Centre To End Human Trafficking.](#)



Approach

the Conversation with Care

Start Early – The best way to prevent sex trafficking is by starting discussions about topics like healthy relationships, self-esteem and consent at a young age. Any child can be targeted, particularly those with access to a cell phone.

Be Patient – Know that the person you are reaching out to may not open up or share information during your first conversation. This is especially true if they feel – or have been told – they have done something wrong. They may insist everything is good. Trust your instincts. Don't give up; try again.

Create a Judgment-free Space – Creating a judgment-free space is crucial for productive, open conversations. Not all conversations need to be confrontations. By placing blame or inferring judgment you immediately alienate the other person and they are unlikely to continue in the conversation. Here are some tips for creating the right environment:

- Provide your undivided attention – remove all distractions, put your phone down, silence all notifications.
- Use a tone that is kind, gentle, and respectful.
- Go in with the intent of understanding as best you can.
- Ask questions and provide active listening responses like: *“What I think I’m hearing is...” “I believe you’re saying that...” “Do I understand that...”*
- Let the other person set the pace of the conversation.
- Validate the person’s emotions. Do not attempt to change how they are feeling.
- Do not pass judgment on this person’s situation or actions.

Empowering Topics

Empowerment is vital to ending sex trafficking. The following talking points should be revisited often as situations and attitudes can change quickly.



Consent / Body Autonomy

You are the only person in charge of your body. No one should ever do anything to you or make you do anything that you're not comfortable with. No one should touch you if you don't want them to. If someone tries to pressure you into something, you always have the right to say “no” or change your mind, no matter how many times you've previously said “yes”.



Self-worth/Self-confidence

You are your own unique individual and that is amazing. No one should ever make you feel like you're less than anyone else. No one is perfect. We all excel in our own way. What do you like most about yourself?



Support

Please know I am always here for you. I care for you unconditionally. I support you and if I can't help, I will help you find someone who can.



Boundaries

You have the right to set boundaries. If you feel something isn't right, trust yourself. You choose what you do, when you do it and who you do it with. Those who care about you will respect your decisions. If they don't, take it as a sign of trouble.



Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

The simple truth is that anyone who loves you doesn't want to hurt you. Sometimes movies or those around us don't always convey the right message. For example, obsession does not equal love. Control does not equal caring. Sex should never be an obligation. Here are some things to consider:

- **5 signs of a Healthy Relationship:** respect, consent, good communication, being supportive, and freedom
- **5 signs of an Unhealthy Relationship:** feeling pressured, being threatened, violence, isolation, loss of control

Conversation Dos and Don'ts

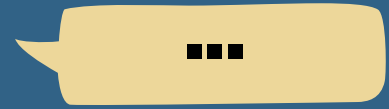


- Ask open-ended questions
- Listen – really listen
- Be non-judgmental – Use words like: *“I’m not sure I understand, could you tell me more about...”* instead of *“You’re not making any sense;”* or say something like: *“I’m concerned about your safety”* as opposed to: *“Why did you think that was a good idea?”*
- Be comfortable with silence – the person may need time to gather their thoughts. Your silence conveys patience and caring
- Focus on feelings – allow people to express themselves the best way they can



- Don't start the conversation with a lecture
- Don't psychoanalyze or diagnose
- Don't ask why they have done certain things. It can feel intrusive and may cause the person to feel defensive
- Don't use language that is blaming in nature – *“Why did you do that?” “What were you thinking?”*
- Don't provide directives or definite instructions – *“You need to...”*

Conversation Starters



It can be difficult to find the right words to start talking about sex trafficking. Here are some conversation starters for those simply exploring the topic as well as openers for those concerned that a loved one may be being exploited.

FOR THOSE EXPLORING THE ISSUE



"I care for you and am always concerned for your safety. I would like to talk for a moment about sex trafficking, in case you ever find yourself – or one of your friends – in a dangerous situation."

"I thought it might be helpful to share some of the information I found about the signs of a manipulative person. I just want you to be prepared in case a situation ever seems not quite right."

"Do you ever talk about a healthy vs. unhealthy relationship with your friends? What does a healthy relationship look like to you? What's a sign of a relationship that's not healthy?"

"Do you know what it means when someone exploits someone else? I've heard that it can be a very difficult situation, but it seems to happen more than we think. How might we prevent you or someone you know from being taken advantage of by someone they trust?"

"I was reading about sex trafficking the other day and it's not what everyone thinks it is. What do you know about the issue? What do you find most surprising?"

FOR THOSE CONCERNED SOMEONE IS BEING EXPLOITED



"Can we talk about something important? I'm concerned about you because I think I'm seeing some red flags in your relationship. Please help me understand."

"You know I love you no matter what, right? I could be totally off-base, and tell me if I am, but I am concerned you may be being forced to do things you don't want to do. How are you feeling?"

"You seem like something may be up. It might make you feel better to share what is bothering you. How are you feeling?"

"I've noticed a couple of things that I was hoping to talk with you about. Before I begin, how have you been feeling lately?"

"It seems like you might be going through a tough time right now with your friends. I want you to know that I'm here for you, and you can talk to me about anything without judgment."

Listen

and Adapt

- 1 Listen objectively and without judgment – avoid introducing any opinion, advice or talk of your own experiences.
- 2 Be compassionate to yourself. Do not expect to be an expert on this topic and know that the conversation may not go perfectly. The important thing is that you are having the conversation and that you are emphasizing the needs of those you care about.
- 3 If questions arise and you don't know the answers, discover the information together. *(There are some great resources listed at the end of this document)*
- 4 Keep the door to communication open.

Once the conversation starts, here are some tips to help it progress:

If They Don't Want to Talk to You

Try not to be offended. There are a lot of emotions involved with this issue – disbelief, shame, guilt, fear for safety, love, fear of rejection or judgment from a loved one.

Plant the seed and suggest they speak with someone you both trust. Maybe a friend or a family member.

If they are more comfortable, suggest they call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-833-900-1010. Those who work at the Hotline do not judge. **All calls are confidential, and callers can remain anonymous.**








What to Do if You Learn Someone is Being Trafficked

- Tell them you believe them.
- Explain they do not deserve what is happening to them – it's not their fault.
- If the situation isn't an emergency, call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010) for safety planning tips. They will not call the police unless requested by the caller or if there is a legal duty to report.
- Remember that they didn't "choose" to be trafficked and they may not identify as a "sex trafficking victim." They have been abused by someone and this trauma affects everyone differently.
- Understand these situations can be very complex and difficult to leave due to issues around control, financial dependence, attachment and/or the power structure involved.
- Avoid trying to "save" the person or "fix" the situation *for* them. Ask the person what they want to do instead of dictating the next steps.
- Ask what you can do to help them right now.
- Share that they are not alone; there is hope and people who can help.
- Explain you're not an expert and ask them to consider calling the Hotline when they are ready to talk to people who are trained to help.



You do not have to face this alone. Trust your instincts and reach out if something about your relationship, or that of a loved one, doesn't seem right. Whether you are being exploited, know someone who is, or simply want to learn more, The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010) is here to help.

What Happens if You Call the Hotline:

-  They will listen.
-  They will ask if you're safe.
-  They will not demand any personal information – you can be totally anonymous.
-  They will only connect you with the police if you want them to, or if there is a legal duty to report.
-  They will provide options for community support like safety planning, counselling, housing, legal services, and more.
-  They will understand if you're not ready to make any decisions – you can call back as many times as needed.
-  They will be there for you.

Call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-833-900-1010 or connect online via www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca

Resources

Seek out support to assist and equip you in having these conversations. Here are some additional resources that might be helpful:

- [Aura Freedom Human Trafficking Info Hub](#)
- [PLEA Community Services Children of the Street](#)
- [Covenant House Traffick Stop](#)
- [Cybertip](#)
- [Durham Victim Services Resource Library](#)
- [Speak Out, Stop Sex Trafficking](#)
- [Trafficked Voices](#) - A free CBC account is required for viewing
- [The Trap Simulation Tool](#) – The Trap is an interactive anti-human trafficking tool that adults can use with students to help them learn how to stay safe.
- [Thrive CYN Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth \(CASEY\)](#)
- [Sexual Exploitation Education \(SEE\) / Exploitation Education Institute](#)