

## IDENTIFYING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### FACT SHEET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

You can play an important role in keeping yourself and your friend's safe by understanding how to spot the signs of sexual exploitation and knowing where to go for help.

#### WHAT IS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Sexual exploitation is when someone forces, manipulates or tricks you (or someone you know), into doing something sexual (online, via your phone or in person). It might be someone who you like or trust, someone you've just met or known for a while.

It can start with someone giving you gifts (like phone credit, clothes or even money) and attention that makes you feel special. This is called grooming and although it may seem harmless at first, you may end up feeling like you owe them something in return, and this could involve sexual acts.

Sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact or force. For example, an adult talking to a child in a sexual way or showing them sexually explicit pictures online is a form of sexual exploitation and it's not okay. Knowing how the grooming process works will help you to understand when it may be happening to you or a friend.

**Sexual exploitation is abuse, it's not your fault if this has happened to you and it is never okay.**

#### WHAT IS GROOMING?

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare you (or someone you know), for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with you or your parent/carer.

These sections include explicit descriptions of abuse and may be distressing for some people. If you need to talk to someone, it is recommended that you talk to someone that you trust, this might be a teacher, a parent, your doctor or an allied health professional

Online grooming is a criminal offence and occurs when an adult uses electronic communication (including social media), in a predatory fashion to try to lower your inhibitions, or heighten your curiosity regarding sex, with the aim of eventually meeting you in person for the purposes of sexual activity. This can include online chats, sexting, and other interactions.

It can start with someone sending pornographic images to 'normalise' discussing sexual activities, and then move to requests for naked images or to perform a sex act on a webcam.

## ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Everyone has the right to feel safe and protected from abuse and every relationship should be respectful. You will know you're in a healthy relationship when:

- you and your partner spend good, quality time together
- you support each other
- you listen to each other's feelings
- when you have disagreements, you can talk about it
- you respect each other
- your partner doesn't make demands of you that you are uncomfortable with.

Your relationship might not be good for you if your partner:

- always tells you what to do
- demands to know where you are all the time
- tells you what to wear
- tries to get you to stop seeing or talking to your friends or family
- bullies or threatens you
- puts you down and hurts your feelings
- makes you take sexually explicit pictures of yourself or them
- makes you drink or take drugs
- forces you to do things you don't want to
- forces you to have sex or do something sexual with them or someone else
- threatens to publicly humiliate you (such as posting rude pictures or videos on Facebook or other sites), expose you (like telling your parents or friends about what's happening), or hurt you (such as being violent to you or your loved ones), if you don't do what they say.

People who target and groom children and young people are very deceptive and manipulative in the way they get control over you. It is never your fault and you don't have to deal with the abuse alone. You should always seek help from a trusted adult if you recognise any of these signs in your relationship.

## COULD IT REALLY HAPPEN TO ME?

Yes. Sexual exploitation can happen to anyone, including boys and young men. Offenders can be men, women, other students, family members or trusted friends.

The offence can be committed by any person aged 18 years or over. It does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

The internet has made it much easier for offenders to get access to children and young people to groom and target them for abuse. As a young person, you need to be aware of the dangers of sexual exploitation so you can protect yourself and look out for your friends.

## WHO CAN HELP?

Remember, the abuse is not your fault. You should tell a trusted adult if you are worried about what's happening in a relationship such as:

- your parents
- other family members
- your teacher
- your case worker
- your doctor
- the Police.

Or you could:

- visit eHeadspace [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au) (which provides an online and telephone support service between 9am and 1pm)
- call KidsHelp Line (1800 55 1800 or [kidshelpline.com.au/teens/](http://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/) for 24 hour web or phone chat)
- get independent legal advice from Youthlaw, Victoria Legal Aid, or your local community legal centre.

## WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

### BULLY STOPPERS ONLINE GROOMING FACT SHEET

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/bullystoppers/smgrooming.pdf>

### BULLY STOPPERS SEXTING FACT SHEET

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advice sexting.aspx>.

### TEA AND CONSENT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrXVavnQ>

### SEXUAL TRAFFICKING: JASMINE'S STORY

<http://knowaboutcse.co.uk/spot-the-signs/>