

How to Talk to Your Kids About Human Trafficking



Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery impacting an estimated 50 million victims globally, many of whom are minors. In 2021, minors comprised 28% of sex trafficking victims and 13% of labor trafficking victims in trafficking situations reported to the **National Human Trafficking Hotline**. Traffickers will target individuals they can manipulate and control, which is why youth are especially susceptible to trafficking victimization and why it is important, as a parent, to educate your children about human trafficking. Also vital are life skills that help your children have healthy relationships with friends, family, romantic partners and employers. While these are not easy topics to discuss, this guide will offer some tips on how to have these age-appropriate conversations with your child.



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to Access our Reference Page and
Additional Resources

Child sex trafficking

Occurs when someone under the age of 18 is being bought or sold for sexual purposes or when a minor is exchanging sexual favors for something of value like food, shelter, a shower or safety.

Labor trafficking

Occurs when individuals perform labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, including instances of debt bondage, forced labor and involuntary child labor.

Grooming

The process traffickers use to win their victims' love and trust in order to control and sexually exploit them. Familiarize yourself with warning signs of grooming (e.g., someone wanting to be alone with your child, someone spending too much time with your child) by reviewing materials linked in our reference page.

Sample Kid-friendly Description of Human Trafficking

Traffickers do not always look like what we think "bad guys" should look like. They can seem friendly, generous and like a good person ... like a friend or someone we look up to. However, that is how they convince someone to do things for them, so they can make money. Traffickers don't care about the victim's happiness; they often hurt people, make them work for little or no money, and make them do things they don't want to do.

Age-Appropriate Conversations

Talking to Younger Children

- Teach kids the correct names for body parts. Help your child understand the private parts of their bodies are part of their personal space. No one should see or touch these body parts unless the child is hurting there, needs help or is at the doctor's office.
- Let your kids know they're not in trouble if they talk to you about anything making them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. More tips on age-appropriate communication are available within the Lauren's Kids **online modules** linked on our reference page.
- It is important to teach children the difference between a safe, trusted adult and an adult who may be acting nice to get something from them. For example, an unsafe adult may ask a child to keep an "unsafe secret" (i.e., one that is confusing and makes your child feel icky, threatened or scared). This is different than a "safe secret" (i.e., one that will eventually be told, and, when it is, will make everyone smile, like a surprise party).
- Ask about your child's friends. Traffickers may try to act like a friend to earn their trust, so it's important for children to know friends should not be making them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Talking to Older Children/Tweens

- Start introducing the concept of human trafficking using youth-friendly dialogue, such as the dialogue mentioned within **the HuffPost article** linked in our reference page.
- Let your children know that telling their teacher or you that they are worried about a friend/classmate is kind; it is not tattling.
- Make sure your child understands they should not use any device to take pictures of their private parts. If anyone asks them to take pictures, they need to notify you immediately. Explain that this is not just your rule; it is against the law to have or to take pictures of children's private parts.
- Implement clear rules on Internet use and online safety that your children know and understand.

Talking to Teens

- Take an interest in and ask about your child's romantic interests. Traffickers may try to act like a loving boyfriend or girlfriend to youth in order to eventually manipulate them. It is important for teens to know that boyfriends and girlfriends should not make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Discuss characteristics of healthy relationships (e.g., open communication, respect for privacy, violence is never okay, consent) and misconceptions about relationships (e.g., a partner is controlling because he/she cares about you; sex is an obligation in a relationship).
- Discuss job hunting and appropriate employer-employee relationships. Traffickers may take advantage of someone who is unfamiliar with navigating the job application process.
 - Make your teen aware of false job promises and red flags to look for when job searching. For example, an employer should not ask a lot of personal questions about you that are not relevant to the job or ask you to lie about your age.
 - Inform your children to be careful with whom they share information (e.g., SSN, home address).

How to Talk to Your Kids About Human Trafficking: Sources Referenced and Additional Resources

Sources Referenced:

- **Digital Health & Safety Resources - Lauren's Kids**
 - <https://laurenskids.org/familysafety/>
- **"Conversation With My Daughter About Human Trafficking" - HuffPost**
 - https://www.huffpost.com/entry/conversation-with-my-daughter-about-human-trafficking_b_7572454
- **How to Talk to Your Kids About Human Trafficking - Bridging Freedom**
 - <https://www.bridgingfreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-human-trafficking.pdf>
- **How to Teach Kids Consent - Children's Hospital Colorado**
 - <https://www.childrenscolorado.org/globalassets/parenting-advice/articles/consent---how-to-teach-kids-consent-by-age.pdf>
- **A Parent Guide to Online Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking During COVID-19 - ECPAT USA**
 - <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/594970e91b631b3571be12e2/t/5eb1582220f28c1741f2d6e1/1588680739195/Parent+Guide+to+Internet+Safety.pdf>
- **National Human Trafficking Hotline Data Report - Polaris Project**
 - <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/National%20Report%20For%202021.docx%20%283%29.pdf>

Additional Resources:

- **Get the Tools to Fight Human Trafficking - Digital Comics by UNITAS**
 - <https://www.unitas.ngo/resources>
- **Talking With Kids About Sex Trafficking - Street Grace**
 - https://www.streetgrace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Talking-With-Kids_Rack-Card_Street-Grace.pdf
- **Special Guest Parent Training - video by Street Grace**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAuD9liLstQ&t=1410s>
- **"Girls Like Us" - a memoir by Rachel Lloyd of GEMS**
 - <https://www.amazon.com/Girls-Like-Us-Fighting-Memoir/dp/0061582069>
- **"Walking Prey: How America's Youth are Vulnerable to Sex Slavery" - a book by Holly Austin Smith**
 - <https://www.amazon.com/Walking-Prey-Americas-Vulnerable-Slavery/dp/1137278730>
- **The Cool Aunt Series: An Online Sex Trafficking Prevention Course for Teens - Rachel Thomas**
 - <https://www.thecoolauntseries.com/>