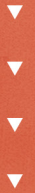# SPOTTING UNSAFE BEHAVIORS

- Grooming is a gradual process that starts with a predator targeting a specific youth, gaining their trust, fulfilling their needs, offering special attention, isolating them, sexualizing the relationship, and maintaining control.
- People who harm, exploit and traffick children and youth are not just strangers online. Trusted leaders, teachers, religious officials, coaches, neighbors, family members, employers, co-workers, and anyone in positions of trust and authority, even peers, can misuse their access to abuse, groom, and coerce youth.

TRAFFICK STOP

- Students shouldn't inherently distrust those around them, but they can learn to differentiate between safe and unsafe touch, how to set and defend their own boundaries, and what kinds of secrets are ok to keep. While most people in positions of authority have the best interests of youth in mind, its ok to question the motives of someone who challenges an individual's boundaries.
- Remember that grooming can happen within families, and many youths are exploited by someone they know. Parents, cousins, siblings, aunts or uncles, etc. can all use their status as family to get special access to a youth. Unfortunately, families, community organizations, schools, places of employment, and places of worship all hold the potential for predators.
- People who harm, exploit, and traffick youth often groom people around them as well. They might spend a great deal of time and money gaining the trust of a youth's caregiver. They might be upstanding citizens or community volunteers. Some predators use generosity, friendliness, and warmth to charm those that a child trusts to make the child seem less believable if they ask for help.
- Predators are good at spotting vulnerabilities and using them to take advantage of a child. For example, if a youth is posting online about having a bad day or fighting with their parents, a predator may use that as a way to begin a conversation and provide "positive affirmations" to start building trust.

Learning Objectives
1. Expand awareness of healthy and unhealthy in person and online relationships.
2. Describe grooming techniques used by people who abuse and exploit children.

Materials
- *Stop Sign Situations* handout

Guided Discussion
Use these questions to generate a discussion among group members.
- Is it harder to set and maintain boundaries with your peers or with adults? Why?
- What kind of secrets are ok to keep?
- What can you do to address a boundary that is not respected?
- What should you do if a peer or an adult is making you uncomfortable?

- When is it appropriate for you to challenge what someone in authority says?
- What resources are available to you if you feel unsafe?
- Are you able to identify a safe person that you can go to if you feel unsafe?
- Do you know some actionable steps to take if you are in a dangerous situation or if someone is making you feel unsafe?

Learning in Action

Share the scenarios with students either by handing them the scenario sheet or by reading it aloud. Have students raise their flag every time they hear something that seems problematic.

If time permits, work together to make an action plan for how team members might approach a situation in which a peer was being groomed. Remind students that they are not required to intervene unless they feel comfortable doing so.

Connecting the Dots

- While there are many situations that can lead to human trafficking, grooming is often involved in some capacity.
- Building the trust of someone to later exploit them is a tactic commonly used by perpetrators; they use trust to test boundaries.
- In addition to trafficking, predators use grooming tactics for other types of exploitation, other crimes (like domestic violence and sexual assault), and generally to force youth to do things that they don't want to do.

Tips for Adapting to Online Delivery

- See "Online Delivery Tip Sheet" in the Facilitator Toolkit for more information about adapting your meeting plan to an online platform.

Reflect & Review

Have students respond to the following prompt (time-permitting):

- What steps will you take if you feel unsafe around an adult?

Invite students to share their answers with the group.

Facilitator Notes   **Upcoming Meeting Dates: __/__/__**

References
FTC - Talk to Your Kids
Common Sense Media - How to Talk to Teens About Dealing with Online Predators
Darkness to Light – Grooming and Red Flag Behaviors
Polaris - Love and Trafficking: How Traffickers Groom & Control Their Victims