

Human Trafficking

Sara Marie Johnson, Survivor



Introduction

Sara Marie Johnson, Certified Peer Support Specialist

- Survivor of Human Trafficking
- Long Term Recovery for Nine Years
- Lives in Myrtle Beach, SC
- Lead Peer Support Supervisor at Shoreline Behavioral Health Services

My Experience



SEX TRAFFICKING: HOW IT HAPPENS

LURING

Establishing a connection, in person or online, with the intent of developing a relationship for the purpose of exploitation.



ISOLATION

Creating distance between the individual and their loved ones.



EXPLOITATION

Ensuring ongoing participation in commercial sexual acts while taking away their earnings.



GROOMING

Identifying and fulfilling the needs and dreams of the individual, for example by showering them with gifts.



MANIPULATION & COERCION

Sending mixed messages, making claims like 'you owe me' or making threats to cause the individual to feel their only option is to participate in commercial sex acts.



Canadian
Human
Trafficking
Hotline



1.833.900.1010



canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca

Basic Stages of Grooming

for Sexual Exploitation



TARGETING: Traffickers target victims who have some noticeable vulnerability: emotional neediness, low self-confidence, or economic stress.



GAINING TRUST & INFORMATION: Obtaining information about the victim is key. This can be done through casual conversations with the victim or with parents. Traffickers often mix well with other adults.

“Up to this point, they had never tried to touch me, never made me feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or that they would harm me.”



FILLING A NEED: The information gained allows the trafficker to fill a need in the victim's life, making the victim dependent on them in some way: buying gifts, being a friend, beginning a romantic relationship, or providing drugs and alcohol.



ISOLATION: The trafficker creates times to be alone with the victim. The trafficker will also begin taking a major role in the victim's life and will attempt to distance the victim from friends and family.



ABUSE BEGINS: The trafficker begins claiming that gifts or services given to the victim must be repaid, whether it be money, drugs, car rides, or mobile phones. In most cases, the trafficker demands sex as the method of repayment.

“I trusted them, they were my friends as I saw it, until one night my main perpetrator raped me, quite brutally as well, in front of a number of people.”



MAINTAIN CONTROL: In many cases the trafficker maintains control of the victim through threats, violence, fear, or blackmail.

“Well if I didn't go out and see them they are going to get my mum and are going to rape her.”

Grooming

Isolation & Sex Trafficking

- Sex trafficking often overlaps with forced labor trafficking, as trafficked sex workers experience sexual abuse as part of being exploited for labor (sexual but also drug dealing and other forms of illegal work).
- They are no longer in control of where they live and how they spend their time away from work. Their IDs and travel documents may have been seized. They have likely been moved to other locations away from the familiar, so that they don't even know where they are and, at any rate, lack the freedom of movement.



Red Flags of Human Trafficking

Physical Red Flags

- Untreated or undertreated workplace injuries
- Bruising and burns
- Exposure to toxic chemicals • Respiratory issues
- Multiple pregnancies/terminations
- Physical impacts of long-term trauma
- Frequent treatment for sexually transmitted infections and injuries
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Communicable and noncommunicable disease (e.g., TB, hepatitis) • Substance use • Dental issues
- Tattoos, burns, or scarring to indicate branding

Emotional Red Flags

- Confusing or contradicting stories
- Inability to focus or concentrate
- Unaware of location, age, time
- Protects the person who hurt them, minimizes abuse
- Guilt and shame about experience
- Reserved/avoiding interaction or providing limited information
- Psychological trauma
- Depression and anxiety disorders
- Sexual acting out in children and young adolescents
- Knowledge and behavior outside of typical range for age
- Fear of appointments taking longer than expected
- Reporting the need to update spouse, friend, or significant other

Spotting the Signs In the Emergency Department



- Reluctance of victims to disclose their true situations
- In many cases of trafficking, the perpetrators will accompany victims to the health facility posing as a friend or family member. They will prevent them from speaking freely. They will refuse to leave the patient's side, or they will demand them to be on speaker phone if left alone.
- Vague chief complaints or only psychiatric symptoms
- Identifying trafficking victims by acknowledging victims' fears and providing a secure, nonjudgmental environment in which to tell their stories; isolate suspected trafficking victims from anyone accompanying them to health facilities

Case Report: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3027426/>
<https://www.easylama.com/lp/human-trafficking-prevention-training/>

Resources to Help in South Carolina

- Safe Place in *Wilmington, NC* - Anonymous Hot Line: (855) 723-7529
Main Business Line: (855) 723-7529 x3
- Jasmine Road in *Greenville, S C* - Referral Line: (864) 283-5198 Main
Business Line: (864) 516-0009
- Lutheran Services Carolinas in *Columbia, S C* – Referral Line: (803)
750-9917 Main Business Line: (803) 750-9917
- The Formation Project in *Charleston, SC* - Tel: 843-375-6635
- I Am Voices , Blooming Flower Housing Program in *Summerville, SC*
Tel: 843-695-7021

My Journey to Healing

- Support Network
- Safe Place to Stay
- Intensive Outpatient Care
- Counseling
- Medical Care
- Advocation
- Slowly entering back into Society by re-learning basic life skills.

