

# GROOMING



- What is it?
- What are the implications?
- How does it take place?
- How to prevent it?



## What is it grooming?

Grooming is the process by which someone, often an online predator, tries to gain the trust of a child or young person in order to manipulate them and exploit them, most often for sexual purposes. This process can take several weeks or months and is very sophisticated and dangerous.



## What are the consequences of grooming?

**Emotional and psychological consequences:** The child may suffer from feelings of shame, guilt and confusion. This can lead to long-term psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**Physical risks:** In extreme cases, grooming can lead to physical abuse or kidnapping.

**Loss of confidence:** A child may lose trust in adults and find it difficult to form healthy relationships in the future.



## How does grooming work?

- 1. Gaining trust:** The predator often presents himself as a friendly and understanding person who shares common interests with the child. He or she may also pose as a peer or someone who is only slightly older.
- 2. Relationship building:** Gradually wins over the child with their compliments, gifts, and positive attention. This process may involve endless conversations, designed to create a strong emotional bond.
- 3. Isolation:** The predator tries to isolate the child from family and friends. The child may claim not to understand their family and friends or say they don't believe them. This step is crucial because the child begins to rely solely on the predator.
- 4. Acquisition of information:** While building the relationship, the predator tries to get as much personal information about the child as possible. This information may include interests, daily routines, concerns, school and address.
- 5. Sexual topics:** After gaining sufficient confidence and information, the predator gradually begins to introduce sexual themes. This may include sending inappropriate images or requests for similar materials from the child.
- 6. Manipulation and coercion:** If the child hesitates or refuses, and the predator has private photos of the child, the predator may use a variety of manipulative tactics, including threats, coercion, or guilt, to achieve their goals.



## How to prevent grooming?



### Education and communication:

→ Teach children about the dangers of the online world. Explain to them that not everyone on the internet is who they say they are.

### Monitoring online activity:

→ Keep track of what your children are doing online, what sites they visit and who they interact with.

### Boundary setting:

→ Teach children not to divulge personal information online and to never agree to meet with someone they only know online.

### Promoting open communication:

→ Create an environment where the child feels safe and knows they can come to you with any problem. This is most important if something has already happened.



**Grooming is a serious threat in the digital age, so it's essential to be vigilant and actively protect children from potential dangers.**

## How can oversharing information online affect a child's adult life?



### What is oversharing?

Oversharing refers to the disclosure of highly personal or detailed information in the online space. This can include information about your family, school, home address, but also feelings and experiences.



### Consequences of oversharing:

→ Damaged reputation and privacy, i.e. leaving digital traces can lead to invasion of privacy and security.

→ Reduced future prospects, i.e., colleges and employers often scrutinize applicants' online presence, and inappropriate postings can negatively impact admission to school or employment.



→ Cyber threats, i.e. sharing of personal data can lead to online stalking (cyberstalking), identity theft or cyberbullying.



### Psychological impact:

→ Dependence on social recognition, i.e. children may seek constant validation from others, which can lead to anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

→ Problems with developing real relationships, i.e. dependence on digital interactions can interfere with the ability to build real relationships.



## Summary

**Social networks can be a great tool for networking, but it's important to be aware of the potential pitfalls of oversharing of information. As parents and educators, we have a responsibility to teach children to use these platforms responsibly.**



If something similar has happened to you, don't hesitate to contact your teacher, parent or helpline, a school psychologist, another confidant or click on [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk).

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