



**SAFE  
RELATIONSHIP**  
*Guide*

# Human Trafficking

## WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is the illegal trade of human beings. It's the recruitment, control, and use of people for their bodies and for their labor. Human trafficking is hidden, fast-growing, and complex—generating billions of dollars each year through the exploitation of millions of men, women, and children. All over the world, the vulnerable are being recruited and exploited at the hands of traffickers.

### SEX TRAFFICKING

Forcing, deceiving, or coercing a person to perform a commercial sex act. Any minor under the age of 18 who is induced to perform a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking according to U.S. law, regardless of whether there is force, fraud, or coercion.<sup>1</sup>

### LABOR TRAFFICKING

Forcing a person to work in captivity for little or no pay. It is recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

## WHERE CAN SEX TRAFFICKING OCCUR?

Victims of sex trafficking can be deceived, forced, or coerced to work in both legitimate and illegitimate industries, which may include the following:

- “escort services, illicit massage services, outdoor sexual solicitation, residential brothels, bars and strip clubs, pornography production, personal sexual servitude, and livestreaming of sexual exploitation.”<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT ARE COMMON SEX TRAFFICKING RECRUITMENT METHODS?

Common methods of recruitment can be through force, fraud, or coercion (which can include threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against an individual), or a combination of these means.

<sup>1</sup>Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), Pub. L. No. 106-386, 103(9)(A), 114 Stat. 1470 (2000), 22 U.S.C.A. 7102(9)(A).

<sup>2</sup>Blue Campaign, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ht\\_101\\_one-pager\\_.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ht_101_one-pager_.pdf)



| <b>FORCE — POWER</b><br><i>(the act of using physical strength against an individual for restraint or physical harm)</i>  | <b>FRAUD - DECEPTION</b><br><i>(the act to deceive or trick someone for the purpose of personal gain)</i>   | <b>COERCION - MANIPULATION</b><br><i>(the act of using psychological manipulation)</i>   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• threats</li> <li>• sexual abuse</li> <li>• physical abuse</li> <li>• substance abuse</li> <li>• mental abuse</li> <li>• forced labor</li> <li>• control</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exploiting youthful curiosity about sex</li> <li>• grooming for trust</li> <li>• seduction; wooing into romantic relationships (e.g., loverboy)</li> <li>• false promises of a better life financially, protection, and emotional security</li> <li>• tricked job opportunities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shame and fear</li> <li>• threats and pressure</li> <li>• blackmail</li> <li>• intimidation</li> <li>• sextortion</li> <li>• debt bondage</li> <li>• bonded labor</li> <li>• involuntary servitude</li> </ul> |

*It is important to know that anyone under the age of 18 who is induced to perform a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking according to U.S. law, regardless of whether there is force, fraud, or coercion.*

### **WHO IS AT RISK OF BECOMING A VICTIM OF SEX TRAFFICKING?**

While anyone can become a victim of human trafficking, there are certain groups of people who are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation because of their situation. Vulnerable individuals are those with certain positions or conditions which make them highly susceptible to being influenced by physical, mental, or emotional harm.

Human trafficking victims can be any “age, race, gender identity, sex, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, and socioeconomic class.”<sup>3</sup> Victims will not always come forward to seek help if they are in a position to do so because of vulnerability, language barriers (where foreign victims are involved), or fear of law enforcement.<sup>4</sup> In other instances, individuals may be abused, exploited, or trafficked by family or close friends, and not identify as a victim for a number of reasons, such as familiar relationships.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Blue Campaign, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ht\\_101\\_one-pager\\_.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ht_101_one-pager_.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Blue Campaign, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ht\\_101\\_one-pager\\_.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ht_101_one-pager_.pdf)



People at higher risk of becoming a trafficking victim may include:

- Persons identified as migrants, irregular migrants, stateless populations, refugees, or foreign-born, and other minority population
- Persons with physical or intellectual disabilities
- Persons facing employment instability, financial insecurity, and debt
- Children, unaccompanied minors, minors in child welfare systems
- Youth who identify in the population of LGBTQ+
- Persons with low self-esteem (self-concepts)
- Persons with substance abuse and addictions
- Children and youth in foster care or runaways
- Persons experiencing housing instability, poverty, or strain from low income
- Persons with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) - stressful or traumatic events that occur during a child's formative years such as emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; loss of a parent through divorce, death, or incarceration; experiencing neglect, hunger, or being exposed to violence

### HOW CAN SEX TRAFFICKING HAPPEN?

The loverboy method of trafficking, also known as the romeo pimp method of recruitment, appears at first to be a healthy relationship, often (but not always) involving an older man pretending to be a loving boyfriend. However, over time, it turns into an unhealthy relationship that leads to sex trafficking. Traffickers gain trust and then exploit the victim by luring them into trafficking under the pretenses of a romantic relationship through grooming and abuse.<sup>5</sup>

Next to trafficking for forced labor through false job opportunities, the 'loverboy' tactic is the second-highest identified method across all A21 aftercare cases globally.

### WHERE ARE VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING RECRUITED?<sup>6</sup>

While recruitment can happen anywhere, some places are more dangerous than others, including:

- Online platforms such as dating sites, apps, and social media that provide the opportunity for traffickers to establish contact and gather information from vulnerable people
- Group homes, shelters, and detention centers because loverboys understand they are collections of vulnerable people who are often experiencing hardship
- Popular places such as schools, malls, parks, or concerts that contain large gatherings of youth

<sup>5</sup> reference?? (Quote taken from the photo)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/blue\\_campaign\\_youth\\_guide\\_508.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/blue_campaign_youth_guide_508.pdf)

# Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships

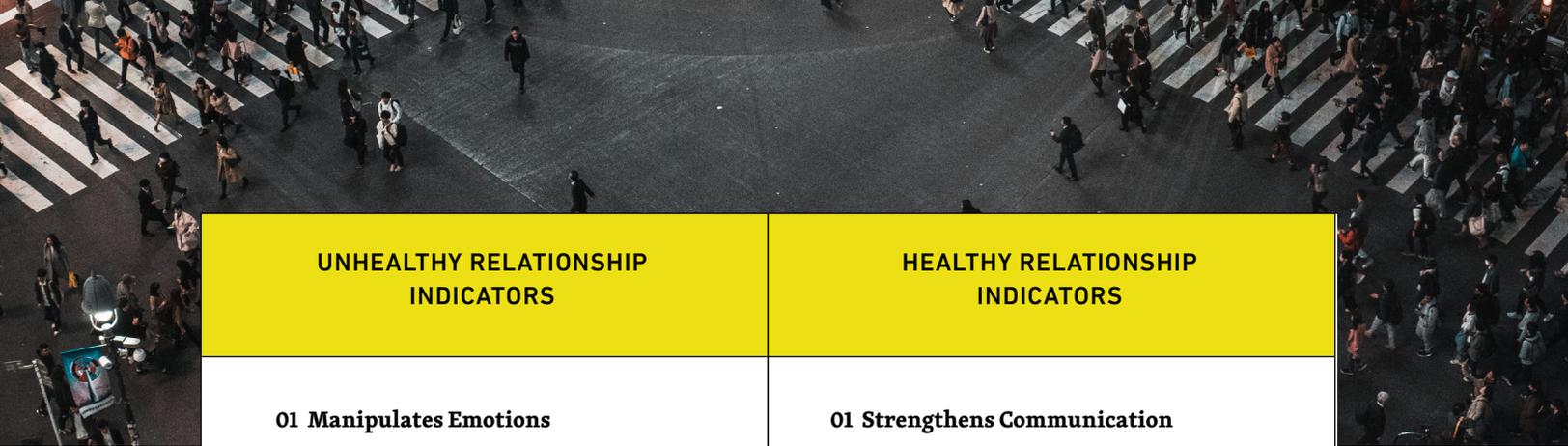
## WHAT ARE HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?

Loverboys approach potential victims and deceive them into what appears to be a healthy relationship by pretending to be a friend or a boyfriend/girlfriend. Meanwhile, their intention is to exploit them. There are indicators for both healthy and unhealthy relationships that are important to know because unhealthy relationships have the potential to develop into human trafficking.

- ▶ **A healthy relationship** is one that is based on respect, honesty, trust, communication, compromise, commitment, healthy boundaries, and a mutual building of each other's self-confidence.<sup>7</sup> Establishing strong protective factors like personal identity of one's value, purpose, and worth through self-concepts are essential in healthy relationships. Protective factors are conditions or attributes that help promote well-being within a relationship and reduce or prevent the risk of a problem or harm in a situation.
- ▶ **An unhealthy relationship** demonstrates one partner forcing the other partner to sacrifice friendships, family, school, personal goals, or even their emotional well-being while in the relationship. These relationships can be physically, emotionally, and mentally abusive, often leading to a **Trauma Bonding cycle**. This can appear as a deep bond, loyalty, or emotional attachment between a person (victim) and the other person in the relationship (loverboy/abuser) that is ultimately destructive.
- ▶ **Relationship indicators** exist in both healthy and unhealthy relationships. They are important to know so that an unhealthy relationship that may involve or lead to human trafficking can be recognized.



<sup>6</sup> United States Government, Youth.Gov Characteristics of Healthy & Unhealthy Relationships <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence/characteristics#:~:text=Respect%20for%20both%20oneself%20and,sexually%2C%20and%20For%20emotionally.&text=Healthy%20relationships%20share%20certain%20characteristics%20that%20teens%20should%20be%20taught%20to%20expect>



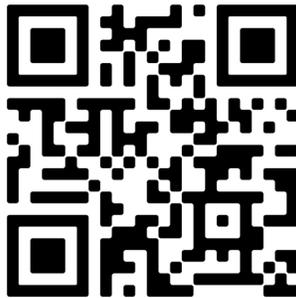
| UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP INDICATORS   | HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP INDICATORS   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>01 Manipulates Emotions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner uses seduction to deceive and “woo” someone into a relationship</li><li>• Partner creates emotional ties, but does not share a great deal of personal information about themselves</li></ul> <p><b>02 Forces Isolation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner thrives on possessiveness, jealousy, or control over their partner</li><li>• Partner tries to distance their partner from family, friends and community</li></ul> <p><b>03 Demands Intimacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner requires the other partner to do things they are uncomfortable with (forceful sex or sex acts, videotaping sexual activity/nudity, engaging in commercial sex or sex acts with his/her friends/strangers, abusing drugs/alcohol, etc.</li></ul> <p><b>04 Requires Control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner limits or removes access to the other’s personal documents (driver’s license, ID card, birth certificate, passport, or visa) or bank account</li></ul> <p><b>05 Utilizes Control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner is physically aggressive privately and/or publicly (grabbing, pushing, hitting, slapping)</li></ul> | <p><b>01 Strengthens Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner respects open and honest conversations in your relationship</li><li>• Partner shares personal information (e.g., job, family history, childhood memories)</li></ul> <p><b>02 Maintains Connection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partners trust each other and allow each to have other relationships with family and friends</li><li>• Partners share mutual friendships</li></ul> <p><b>03 Respects Boundaries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partners establish consent boundaries</li><li>• Partners can express openly about their emotional and physical needs and what makes them feel comfortable</li></ul> <p><b>04 Promotes Autonomy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner gives their partner space to have their own opinions and interests</li><li>• Partners feel heard and that their voice matters</li></ul> <p><b>05 Supports Each Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partners use respectful language and are attentive and supportive of one another</li><li>• Partners work through disagreements by listening and seeing each point of view without violence</li></ul> |

# Relationship Safeguards

- Have a safety network (circle of trust) and maintain relationships with your safety network by sharing about your new relationship.
- Ask questions about your partner to get to know them personally.
- Keep important numbers on your partner at all times, including the number of someone you feel safe contacting if you are in trouble.
- Keep all important documents and identification in your possession at all times.
- Protect your rights. Your identification documents and personal property belong to you.
- Let your partner know if something makes you uncomfortable. If your honesty is met with aggression or punishment, inform a trusted friend/relative or the police.
- Be aware of your surroundings to identify potential safety concerns. Trust your judgment.
- Always keep your own personal items with you including your cell phone and bank account access. You can also make copies of important documents, keep digital backups, and/or store with a trusted friend.
- Establish consent boundaries, allowing you to use assertive communication to make personal decisions.
- Create a preventive plan on how to avoid dangerous situations and think of protective ways to respond rather than react if danger arises or you feel threatened.
- Ask for help. Contact the police or a trusted friend.



*Loverboy Recruitment  
Video (Minor)*



*Loverboy Recruitment  
Video (Adult)*



*Additional  
Safety Guide*

## TAKE ACTION

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If you or someone you know is in an unhealthy relationship, or if you suspect human trafficking could be taking place, respond by:

- Contacting someone in your safety network/trust circle
- Reporting suspected sex trafficking: call: 010 22 07 71 or 071 72 10 771
- For immediate danger or in case of an emergency, call 1288

## IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.