



## **Protecting God's Children for Adults**

### **What if the Warning Signs are Not Obvious, or Don't Occur in Public?**

Wouldn't it be nice if sex abusers exhibited all of their warning signs in public—right out in the open for others to see? That would certainly make it easier for the rest of us to recognize the abusers and to take definitive action. Unfortunately, many—if not most—child sex abusers have refined their manipulation tactics to the point that much of their victim grooming takes place away from the watchful eyes of others. Hence, some of the significant warning signs of potential abusers are behaviors that occur in private. Among these warning signs are:

- Showing pornography to children.
- Using sexually explicit language or telling sexual jokes.
- Allowing children to do things their parents would not allow.
- Giving gifts without the permission of the child's parent or guardian.

So, if these types of behaviors occur in private, how do we recognize these warning signs? After all, these are things we can't see ...

#### **Showing pornography to children**

It is very unlikely that you will find out if someone is showing pornography to your children—unless your children tell you. When children are shown pornographic pictures, they see themselves as being trapped. They have been told not to look at adult “stuff” and now, although they did not seek it out, *they have seen it*.

The best way to find out whether someone is showing pornography to your children is to let your children know that if anyone shows them pornography, they can tell you about it and they won't be in trouble for having seen it. If children are not afraid of being in trouble for having seen it, the molester's tactics and intentions are thwarted. As a parent or guardian, you are in the best possible position to establish this understanding with your children and to reassure them that they can tell you about it and they won't be in trouble for having seen it. We've repeated this message because it's important for you to establish this understanding with your children and to provide reassurance by repeatedly reinforcing this message and by following through with your promised behavior, as needed.

#### **Using sexually explicit language or telling sexual jokes**

When my son was approximately 7 years old, he came in from school one afternoon, walked into the kitchen, put his hands on his hips and let go with a stream of curse words. I responded by looking at him with wide eyes and saying, “Wow, what was that about?” He said: “I can say that if I want.” Then I told him that I supposed that he could, but that I didn't have to listen to those words or have them in my house. So, I told him, if he intended to say those words, he would have to go out in the back yard and say them to himself. The bravado was gone immediately and he stopped using those words—permanently. Later that day, I found out where he learned those words—and I had a conversation with that person.

The easiest and most effective way to find out whether someone is using sexual or other inappropriate language with children is to listen. In many cases, these phrases and words will “slip” in conversations. Children will use words that they should not know at their age, or say sexual words in a context that makes no sense. If you listen closely and respond carefully, you can usually find out where they are hearing explicit language. Listening to your children is your best opportunity to discover whether someone is using sexually explicit language with them.

#### **Allowing children to do things their parents wouldn't allow**

Admittedly, this is challenging to discover. However, communication is the key. That means both talking with your children and listening to them. When communication is the key, you may notice comments that are clues that someone is allowing them to do something that you *won't permit them to do*. Also listen to their conversations with each other when you are near your children, but not directly in front of them—in the car, in the family room, or at family or neighborhood events, for example. “Car talk” among young people is a vast resource of information. Listen and learn!

### **Giving gifts without the permission of the child's parent or guardian**

Small gifts such as candy or soda will be hard to uncover unless your child tells you about them. However, be sure that you notice when your child is sporting anything new or something that you did not purchase for him or her.

Offenders use gifts as lures. They lure children into a trap of secrecy and that lays the groundwork for the rest of the grooming process. Notice if your child is sporting a new shirt or a jacket or even a backpack or electronic game. Ask the child where the item came from, and then check it out yourself to verify the source. If the “new item” is part of a grooming process, the child is trapped in a veil of secrecy. Remember: you should always be suspicious when someone gives your child a gift without your permission. Let the child's benefactor explain his or her actions to you until you are satisfied that there is no ulterior motive.

### **Bottom Line:**

Some warning signs are hard to see. They are part of the grooming process that is intended to separate the child from the child's parents or guardians. Your watchful eye, listening ear, and “healthy suspicion” of the adults who interact with your child can mean the difference between a child molester's success or failure with your child. Don't be fooled by your opinions of the person. Look at what happened and take appropriate actions to protect your children.

---

Training Bulletin Posted on: 2004-07-29 16:35:30.0 - It has been viewed 202759 times

657642 NEO