

INCLUSION AND STAYING SAFE

What does it mean to be sexually groomed?

KEY WORDS

grooming | deception | trust



Grooming is a practice in which an adult pretends to be the peer of a young person they're chatting to on the Internet to create a relationship of trust, so that they can **emotionally control and even blackmail them for sexual purposes**.

What are the phases of grooming?

Let's read about certain patterns of behaviour and common phases to better detect and prevent grooming.

1. Creating a bond of trust

Normally a groomer pretends to be another age, very close to that of the victim. They may also give gifts, empathise on a deep level with the young user by listening to their problems, and take advantage of that information to later blackmail them.

2. Isolating their victim

The groomer may insist on keeping the chats a secret. They do this to tear away the user's support network (family, friends, teachers, etc.), leaving him or her unprotected. Isolation is considered successful when the victim decides not to tell anyone about their relationship online or tells the groomer exactly who has access to the computer or phone that they're using to communicate with them.

3. Conversations and requests about sex

Once the groomer feels confident, they begin to introduce sexual conversations little by little. They do this to achieve their main aim which is asking for sexual material or even meeting in person, so that they are able to later manipulate, threaten or blackmail the victim to stay quiet and accept the situation.

What can you do if you believe someone online is pretending to be someone else?

Normally, each platform or social network offers a mechanism to **report false profiles**.

For example, in the case of **X** (formerly Twitter), it offers the possibility of reporting a problem related to brands and another for identity theft. If you also feel that an account is bothering you, you can **block it** in such a way that it can no longer follow you, and you will not be able to follow it.



Facebook also offers different options when reporting fake profiles. By clicking on the profile and selecting the ellipses (...) next to it, we can report or block the person.

Another platform is **Instagram**, which also offers reporting mechanisms for identity theft, blocking people, abusive behaviour and spam, harassment, etc.

However, in situations where a crime has been committed or we believe might be committed, we must **inform the police** and provide all types of data, information and evidence to stop the groomer before they do more harm.

So, despite the fact that the Internet can be a place with a lot of valuable insight and supportive communities, it's also important to have your online radar on high alert! You can never be too sure about the intentions of someone behind a screen. If something feels off or you sense any red flags, don't hesitate to **speak up to an authority and report it**. Let's be cautious and look out for one another!



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