What is sex trafficking and how can I stay safe online?

Time Required: 1 hr

Learning Objectives:

- Making students aware of sex trafficking in Ontario and associated online risks
- Providing concrete ways in which students can protect themselves from being targeted by sex traffickers in online spaces.
- Speaking the language of life … "recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it."

Notes for Educators:

There are many myths surrounding sex trafficking. You will need to gauge the level of knowledge/awareness of your students and decide if you need to spend more time on certain areas of the lesson than others.

Review the *Preventing Sex Trafficking: Online Safety Tips - for educators* to become more familiar with online safety strategies.

There is a possibility that students may bring up residential schools and abuse by people in positions of authority. These did happen and are shameful parts of our history. Unfortunately, in all professions and positions of authority there are a small number of people who use their position to take advantage of others. If this topic is broached and you are not comfortable discussing it, you can table it for another day and invite your administrator, chaplain or priest in to assist.

ONTARIO ENGLISH Catholic Teachers ASSOCIATION
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Materials

- Notebook or blank paper for journal reflection
- Projector and access to the internet
- Video and/or article featuring survivors of sex trafficking in Ontario
- Access to student computers OR if computer access is limited, white paper, markers, pencil crayons
- Photocopies of "Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation: Online Safety Tips" handout
- Preventing Sex Trafficking: Online Safety Tips - For educators

Reflection:

Write or post the following for students to reflect on prior to the lesson. Give students about 5 minutes to jot down ideas.

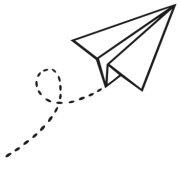
We understand that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it. What actions can you take to protect and cherish your own life? (Answer, prove, extend)

Activity One

This is a think-Pair-Share activity. Begin by explaining to students that you will be discussing the topic of sex trafficking in Ontario with the purpose of dispelling common myths about this crime. You will also be discussing ways teens can stay safe from sex traffickers online.

- Ask students to reflect on the following questions, and write down their answers. Emphasize that the purpose of this activity is to explore what they already know/think they know about sex trafficking and that it is okay not to have the right answers.

    a. What is sex trafficking?
    b. Where does it happen?
    c. Who is at risk of being targeted for child sexual exploitation and sex trafficking?
    d. Who can be a perpetrator?



- Have students form pairs and discuss their answers. After a few minutes, encourage students to share their answers with the class.

- Provide the students with the following answers to the questions. Ask students to complete their own definitions based on these answers.

  1) What is sex trafficking?

  Child sexual exploitation and Sex Trafficking refers to situations where youth (under the age of 18) are forced to exchange sexual acts or images for material items such as food, shelter, drugs, clothing and/or non-material items such as protection, love, and belonging through the use of power, control and manipulation. Child sexual exploitation includes all child pornography offences, age of consent offences as well as prostitution under the age of 18. [1]

  2) Where does it happen?

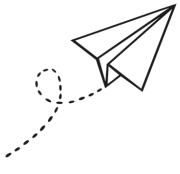
  Sex-trafficking is a growing problem in Canada and has been steadily on the rise since 2010. Between 2009 and 2016, 2/3 of all reported sex-trafficking crimes in Canada occurred in Ontario. Sex trafficking can happen anywhere. In school, online, at malls, concerts, hotels, private residences.

  3) Who is at risk of becoming a victim?

  Most sex trafficking victims are women and girls under the age of 25. While anyone is at risk of being victimized, Indigenous women and girls, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and other marginalized groups often have risk factors that make them more vulnerable. Risk factors include familial discord, poverty, neglect and abuse, substance abuse, a lack of a sense of belonging and low self-esteem.

  4) Who can be a perpetrator?

[1] Children of the Street Society, *Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Youth in Canada: A Prevention and Early Intervention Toolkit for Parents*, p.4.



Although we know *most sex-traffickers tend to be young males, we also know sex-traffickers can be anyone regardless of their gender. Peers, relatives, friends, domestic partners, gang members, internet predators, etc. It is important to note that women and girls can also act as recruiters and groomers for a trafficker who is controlling and exploiting them. Make sure to challenge any problematic stereotypes students might bring up as an answer to this question.*

Activity Two

In order to emphasize the fact that anyone can become a victim of sex trafficking, show a video or read an article featuring a survivor's story. The YouTube video "What is Sex Trafficking?" from the youtube channel *RealRhonelle* created by Rhonelle Bruder.

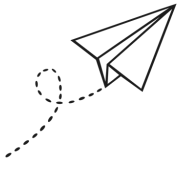
- As a class, have students reflect on the video:
  What about it surprised them?
  Have they heard similar stories before?
  What risk factors can make people vulnerable to sex traffickers?
  Could being part of your church and school community help minimize your risk? How?

Activity Three

The second half of this lesson plan focuses on online safety. Begin by asking students why sex traffickers might prefer the internet to approach their victims. The discussion should focus on how youth tend to be less cautious online and thus an easier target for traffickers.

Ask students to help you create a list on the board of all of the online spaces where students might encounter a sex trafficker. Some answers may include:
1) Instagram
2) Snapchat
3) YouTube
4) TikTok
5) Facebook
6) Dating/ "find friends" apps
7) Online gaming chat/other message boards/apps

Hand out the student copy of "Preventing Sex Trafficking: Online Safety Tips". As a class, discuss each of the tips and have students fill in the "explanation" boxes of the chart. Ask students to think of additional safety tips to add to the list.



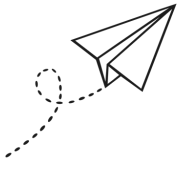
If possible, show students how to change privacy settings or disable geotagging in different social media platforms, as students may not know how to.

Activity four

Each one of us is a gift from God and need to value and keep safe the gift we have been given. Working with a partner, have students create an infographic (or a poster if computer access is limited) that educates other teens on how to stay safe online from sex-traffickers using the phrase “you are a gift from God” or a relevant bible quote of their choosing. Infographics should include specific safety tips as well as a list of community resources that teens can access if they or someone else they know becomes a victim of sex-trafficking.

Wrap-up

Conclude by discussing some of the infographics created by students and post them in the classroom and other areas of the school.

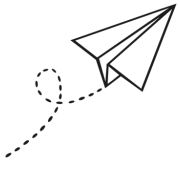


Preventing Sex Trafficking: Online Safety Tips

Online Safety Tip	How does this tip promote my online safety?
Disable geotagging on your phone	
Set strict privacy settings on social media	
Think before you post	
Use generic usernames	
Message/chat with people you know in person	
Watch out for overly friendly or complimentary followers/comments	

Preventing Sex Trafficking: Online Safety Tips-*Teacher Copy*

Online Safety Tip	Explanation



Disable geotagging on your phone	*Geo-tagging attaches geographical locations to posts, allowing followers to see exactly where the person was when they made the post. Sex traffickers may use this information to locate victims. They may also use this information as a way to initiate conversation/create a false familiarity with victims. For example, the sex trafficker may claim that they saw the poster at the geo-tagged location and that they looked beautiful.*
Set strict privacy settings on social media	*Only allow your friends/followers to view your pictures and posts. Only accept friends/followers that you know in person.*
Think before you post	*Victims can be lured because they have shared personal experiences or images like bullying at school, struggles with poor body image or conflicts at home.* *In addition, encourage students to be careful not to include identifying information in your posts, including phone numbers, where they live/work, etc.*
Use generic usernames	*Make sure your username does not reveal personal information about yourself (e.g. your full name or birthday)*
Message/chat with people you know in person	*Keep messages private and with people you know. If you are messaging with someone new, do not reveal any personal information about yourself (first and last name, birthday, where you live, etc.).*
Watch out for overly friendly or complimentary followers/comments	*Online sex traffickers often try to establish friendships/relationships with their victims. Be wary of anyone you don't know who is commenting in an overly friendly or loving way.*

