



## Essential Knowledge for Parents and Guardians on Human Trafficking Prevention for Youth Ages 13–20

- **Human trafficking is exploitation**—not kidnapping—and can occur within local communities, schools, or online environments without any movement across borders. [[fbi.gov](https://www.fbi.gov)]
- Traffickers often **target youth by exploiting emotional needs such as belonging, love, money, or stability, using manipulation** rather than force in many cases. [[cacofniagara.org](https://www.cacofniagara.org)]
- **Grooming is a gradual process where offenders build trust through attention, gifts, or relationships** before introducing control or exploitation. [[stopmodern...lavery.org](https://www.stopmodern...lavery.org)]
- **Social media, gaming platforms, and messaging apps are common tools traffickers use** to initiate contact, build relationships, and eventually exploit youth. [[cacofniagara.org](https://www.cacofniagara.org)]
- **Warning signs may include sudden behavioral changes, secrecy, unexplained gifts or money, withdrawal from family, or new controlling relationships.** [[schoolsafety.gov](https://www.schoolsafety.gov)]
- **Traffickers may pose as romantic partners, friends, mentors, or employers,** often making **false promises** of love, jobs, or financial opportunity. [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov)]
- **Youth may not recognize exploitation or may feel loyalty, fear, or shame,** making them unlikely to ask for help or self-identify as victims. [[fbi.gov](https://www.fbi.gov)]
- **Any minor involved in commercial sex is legally considered a trafficking victim,** regardless of perceived consent or circumstances. [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov)]
- **Online safety is critical—youth should avoid sharing personal information, images, or location data** with individuals they do not know and trust in real life. [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov)]
- **Parents should maintain open, nonjudgmental communication** so youth feel safe reporting uncomfortable interactions, online requests, or suspicious relationships. [[charityfoo...prints.com](https://www.charityfoo...prints.com)]
- **Prevention improves when families educate youth about manipulation tactics such as “love bombing,”** secrecy, pressure, and requests for favors in exchange for gifts or support. [[stopmodern...lavery.org](https://www.stopmodern...lavery.org)]
- **Encouraging critical thinking about opportunities**—such as modeling, travel, jobs, or “easy money”—helps youth identify potential fraud or coercion early. [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov)]
- **Strong, supportive relationships with trusted adults significantly reduce vulnerability** by giving youth safe alternatives to risky situations or offers. [[charityfoo...prints.com](https://www.charityfoo...prints.com)]

- If trafficking is suspected, **parents and youth should prioritize safety and report concerns to trusted authorities** or the National Human Trafficking Hotline rather than confronting suspected traffickers directly.
- For immediate danger call **911**, and to report tips you can call the HSI Tip Line at **1-866-347-2423**. [dhs.gov]
- To get help or share concerns, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-888-373-7888** or text “**BEFREE/HELP**” to **233733** (24/7, confidential support). [humantraffickinghotline.org], [dhs.gov]

**Blink3** is the **Universal nonverbal SOS** for victims of human trafficking and abuse, blinking 3 times is a way to ask for help please see <https://blink3.org/> for more information, and free courses

## Essential Safety Tips for Kids Ages 13 to 20 on Staying Safe from Human Trafficking

- **Human trafficking is exploitation** (not “kidnapping”) and can happen in everyday places and online, so staying alert in normal situations matters.
- **Traffickers often use manipulation and grooming—building trust first**—so pay attention when someone pressures you to keep secrets, move fast, or rely on them.
- **Be cautious of “too good to be true” offers for jobs**, money, travel, modeling, or fame—especially if details are vague or they push you to act immediately.
- **Protect yourself online because traffickers commonly use social media** and messaging to contact, recruit, and control young people.
- **Avoid moving conversations to private or encrypted channels with people you don’t truly know**, because secrecy makes manipulation easier and help harder to reach.
- **Never meet someone you only know online by yourself**, and always tell a trusted adult where you’re going, who you’re with, and when you’ll check in.
- **Watch for red flags like sudden expensive gifts**, someone controlling your phone/money/ID, or a relationship that isolates you from friends and family.
- **If someone tries to make you feel indebted (“you owe me”), trapped, or afraid** of consequences, that pressure can be a form of coercion.
- **Trust your instincts—if a situation feels unsafe or confusing**, leave and reach out to a trusted adult immediately.
- **Stay connected to safe adults and friends**, because strong, supportive relationships reduce vulnerability and make it easier to get help quickly.
- **If you think you or a friend might be at risk, don’t confront a suspected trafficker; prioritize safety** and contact help or authorities instead.
- You can reach the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** at **1-888-373-7888** or text **HELP/INFO** to **233733 (BEFREE)** for support and guidance.

- If a child may be missing or exploited, contact **NCMEC** at **1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)** or submit a report through the **CyberTipline**.
- Remember that no single “sign” proves trafficking—context matters—so it’s always okay to report concerns even when you’re unsure. [[fbi.gov](https://www.fbi.gov)] [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov)], [[stopmodern...lavery.org](https://www.stopmodernslavery.org)] [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov)] [[schoolsafety.gov](https://www.schoolsafety.gov)], [[fbi.gov](https://www.fbi.gov)] [[acf.gov](https://www.acf.gov)], [[charityfoo...prints.com](https://www.charityfoundation.org)] [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov)], [[fbi.gov](https://www.fbi.gov)]
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