



Grooming
Awareness
Activity

an activity for church leaders and members

Material developed by Susan M Crittall © 2017

Overview



Purpose of activity:

- grow understanding and awareness of grooming
- illustrate grooming behaviours
- illustrate interrupting grooming
- empower people to interrupt grooming



Process of activity includes:

- input, table group task, whole group discussion, handout for participants

Talking about grooming...



You may find this:

- difficult
- unsettling
- challenging
- confronting
- distressing



Talking about grooming may...



- trigger stories and events for you
- cause memory flashbacks
- make you revisit memories
- remind you of things that you or your family/friends have experienced



Being Safe



- recognise your own story
- seek the support you need



Church congregations and members...



- gather together out of love for and commitment to God
- relationships express love and respect
- need to be safe places for all people especially those who are vulnerable
- can find many ways to support and encourage each other and to grow healthy relationships

Facing reality



- Most people would never seek to abuse or harm others
- Some people do seek to abuse and harm others



Grooming



- is conduct that creates then exploits opportunities to engage in sexual activity
- is a subtle process (hard to notice)
- involves a graduation or progression of behaviour (gets worse over time)



A definition of grooming



A process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of this child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance, maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender's abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions.

Craven, Brown and Gilchrist 2007 as quoted in O'Leary, Koh and Dare 2017
Grooming and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts (Royal Commission research paper)

Who can be groomed?



- Children
- Young people
- Adults
- Church congregations



Anyone!

Who might be a groomer?

A person who is...



- young or old – child/adult
- male or female
- married or single
- a parent/not a parent
- a Minister/Pastor or lay person
- from any cultural background, clan or kin
- a family member (parent, sibling, aunt, uncle, cousin, grandparent)
- a friend and/or neighbour
- a Church congregation member



Anyone!

Groomers of children can be...



- **situational offenders** – something happens that leads to the sexual abuse of a child
- **opportunistic offenders** – look for and take opportunities to sexually abuse children
- **predatory offenders** – are persistently and exclusively sexually attracted to children

*O'Leary, Koh and Dare 2017 Grooming and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts
(Royal Commission research paper)*

Grooming can take place



- family home
- relative's house
- friend's house
- local Church
- community gatherings
- office place
- on-line
- via telephone
- in public
- in private
- camps, buses, cars
- car parks, corridors...



Anywhere!

Stages of grooming process



1. Targeting the person
2. Gaining trust
3. Filling a need
4. Isolation
5. Sexualising the relationship
6. Maintaining control



BLAME!

Intimacy →



Refer Welner in Dooling 2012 Note: Welner uses the language Targeting the Victim. Mindful of survivors of abuse this activity uses the language Targeting the Person.

How does a groomer groom?



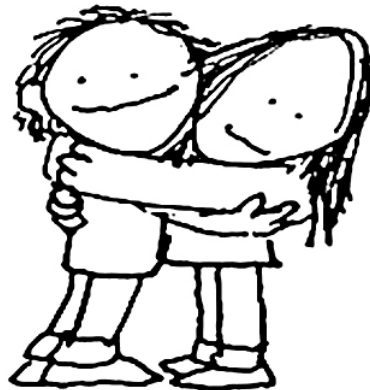
A groomer:

- identifies who is vulnerable, needy, who will not say no, who can keep a secret
- establishes rapport with the Targeted Person and their family and friends
- is charming, trustworthy, likeable
- makes the Targeted Person feel special
- tricks the Targeted Person into believing behaviour is normal and right
- silences the Targeted Person with threats and blame

Is this grooming?



- Behaviour may or may not be grooming
- That is the subtlety of grooming
- 'Normal behaviour' but intention to exploit



Possible grooming warning signs in children



- unexplained gifts, money, toys
- refusing to talk about a secret shared with an older adult or child
- nightmares
- sexualised behaviour/play
- sudden mood swings
- writing, drawing, playing about frightening images
- wetting and soiling unrelated to toilet training
- change in eating
- self-harming



Source: www.StopItNow.org

Why groom in Church congregations?



Church congregations	Groomers
Encourage belonging and acceptance	Thrive where people are accepting
Hesitate to question behaviour, struggle to name behaviour	Thrive in silence
People of good will who give the benefit of the doubt	Thrive when people accept excuses or justifications

Church culture



Church congregation members want to be

nice

Challenge for Church congregation members



- To risk offending someone by challenging their behaviour

or

- To risk someone being abused and harmed by an offender



Table group activity 1



- Set of cards for each table
- Find the 6 stages of grooming cards – they are numbered!
- Line the 6 stages in order across the table



you will be spreading rows of cards below these headings

Table group activity II



- Sort the remaining cards into their separate colours.
8 different coloured groups
6 cards to a group
- Working with one coloured card group at a time arrange the cards under the 6 stages of grooming - to illustrate the progression of grooming behaviour.
Ask “which card best illustrates ‘targeting the person’, which card best illustrates ‘gaining trust’ etc.”
- Continue arranging each coloured group of cards.
- Take time to share and discuss.

Interrupting grooming



- Grooming can be interrupted.
- Early interruption impacts the progression of grooming behaviour.
- Interruption names behaviour.
- Interruption calls for change.

Congregation is committed to being a safe place for all people especially vulnerable people (children and adults).
Congregation has clear expectations of behaviour.
Congregation has processes in place for keeping vulnerable people safe.
Congregation members are educated about safe ministry.
Congregation leaders are trained about responding to disclosures and allegations/complaints of abuse and harm.

I don't mean to offend you but I feel I need to let you know that this Church has a number of processes around keeping people safe. Being a new person here I would really like you to feel welcomed. We make sure that everyone knows the processes we have. These processes are:
We've both been part of the congregation a long time. I don't mean to offend you but I am concerned about something I saw. I need to talk with you about my concern.
Games of catch and tickle with children are not ok. It is not ok to sit a child on your lap. Inform the minister/pastor.

TP says: No. Stop. I feel uncomfortable. There are some secrets I don't keep.
We don't do that here.
My gut tells me something is wrong.
That behaviour is not ok and this is why.
We have clear ways of relating to people here and the behaviour I observed is not acceptable.
Where did that gift come from?
No gifts or presents thank you.
Tell the minister or pastor.

TP says: No. Stop. This does not feel right. My gut tells me something is wrong. My private parts were "accidentally" touched by that person.
Did that person say what I think they said?
That person seems to want to come between me and my child. That person seems to take a "special" interest in particular people.
Telling sexual jokes, making sexual comments is not ok. Did that just happen?
I need to report this.
Tell the minister or pastor or head office of the Church.

TP says: No. Stop. I need help. I need to talk.
I saw G touch TP and it seemed a bit odd to me.
There seems a close-ness between G and TP that doesn't look right.
I just saw G touch TP's private parts.
I need to report this.
Call the police/child protection unit.
Tell the minister or pastor or head office of the Church.

TP says: G and I have special cuddles. I was told to keep a secret. Something has happened between G and me.
You did the right thing telling me. This needs to stop.
Thank you for telling me. I need to report this to others.
You (TP) are not to blame. It is not your (TP) fault.
Call the police/child protection unit.
Tell the minister or pastor or the head office of the Church.

Table group activity III

Interrupter cards



- There is a set of numbered interrupter cards for each table.
- Place the interrupter cards in a row underneath the other cards.
- Discuss each interruption stage card.
- Read each card out loud (1-6).
- Identify how interruptions change as grooming behaviour escalates.

Whole group discussion



- How do interruptions change between stages 2 and 3?
- What does this reveal about the importance of early interruption?
- Other thoughts or comments?

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Time for reflection



What are you taking away from today about:

- grooming
- groomers
- grooming behaviour
- grooming interruptions

And finally ...



- personal safety – recognising how exploring grooming has impacted you
- seek the support you need