

3rd Millennium CLASSROOMS

4 SIGNS SOMEONE IS BEING GROOMED FOR TRAFFICKING

RED FLAGS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



WHAT IS GROOMING?

Simply put, grooming is the process a human trafficker uses to identify, build trust with, and **ultimately gain control over someone** for the purpose of exploitation.

Grooming often happens gradually. A trafficker may use attention, affection, gifts, financial support, or a sense of belonging to build trust. Over time, that trust can shift into manipulation, isolation, coercion, or control, making the warning signs difficult to recognize (National Human Trafficking Hotline, n.d.).

HOW GROOMING CAN BEGIN

Traffickers typically **identify** someone who is vulnerable and has a need.

They initially come across as friendly and attentive, but that is a tactic to **gain their trust**, learn more about them, and uncover their vulnerabilities.

They **fill** the victim's needs by showering them with affection, attention, gifts, and false promises – anything to hook them.

They **isolate** the victim and then the **abuse** begins. Traffickers may demand sex as repayment and use fraud, force, or coercion to assert **control** over the victim (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2024).



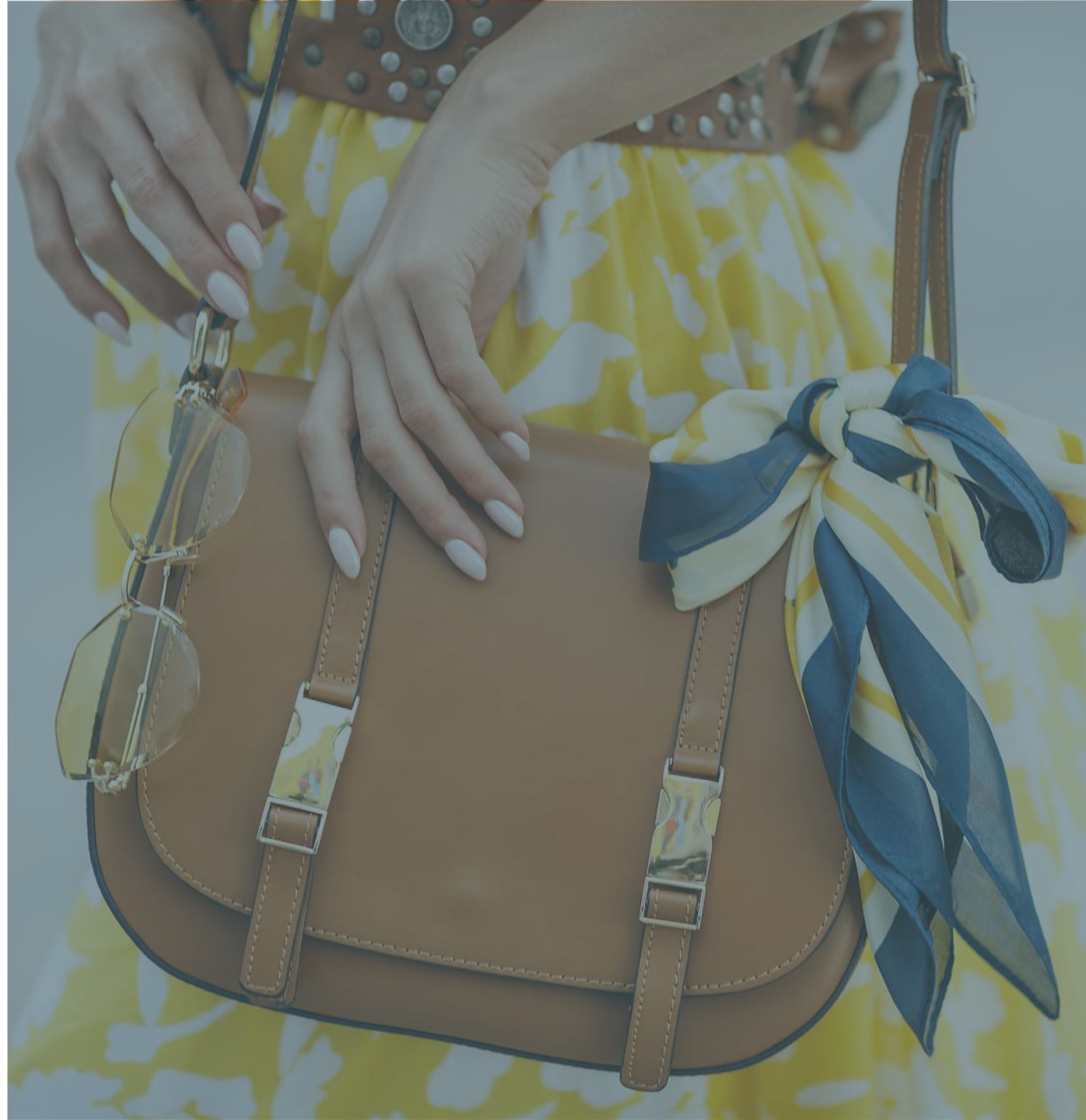
HERE ARE **FOUR IMPORTANT SIGNS**
THAT SOMEONE YOU MAY KNOW IS
BEING GROOMED FOR TRAFFICKING.

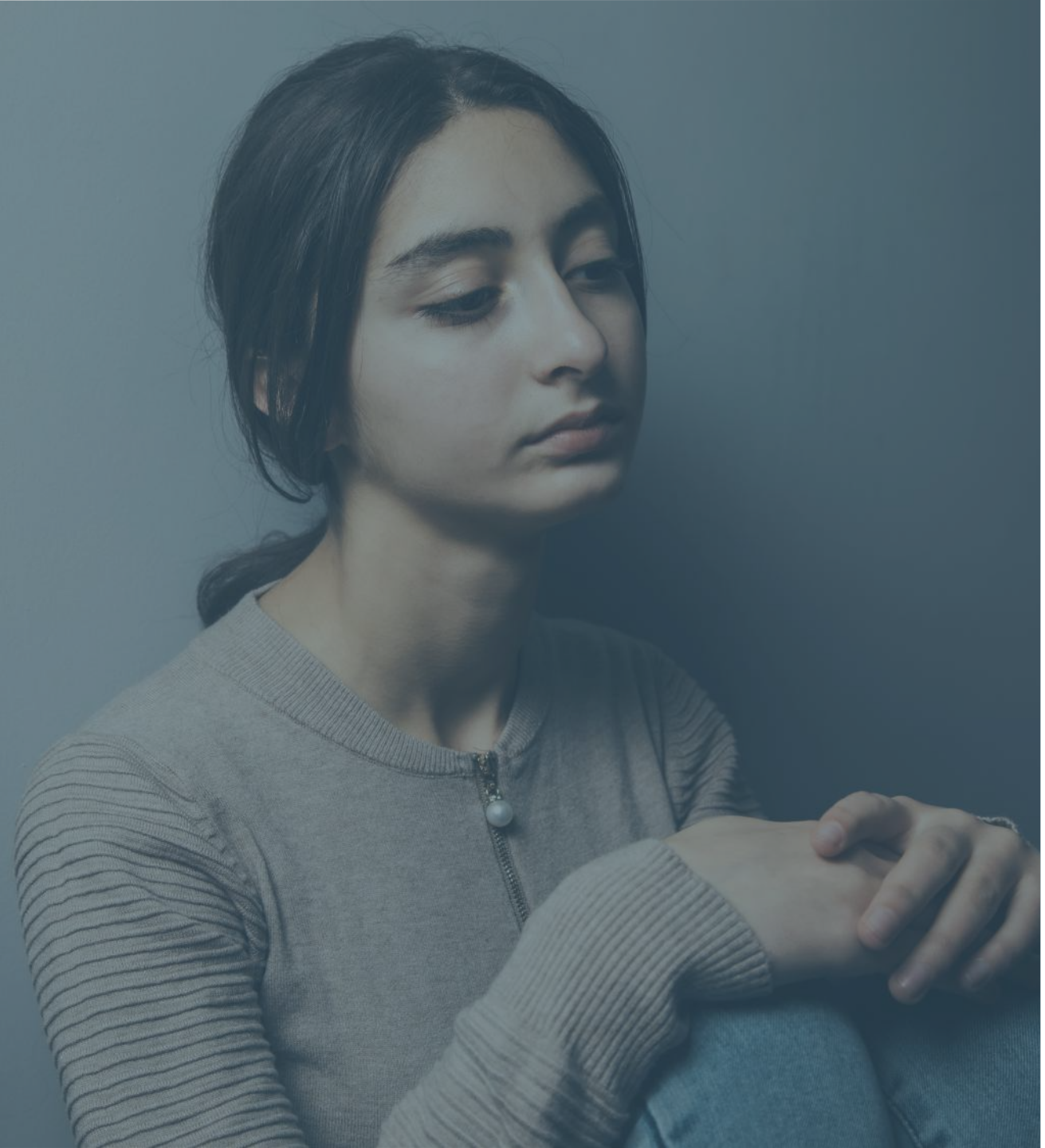
1. NEW THINGS

Traffickers target vulnerabilities and play on a person's need for **value, approval, and love.** They may present themselves as a romantic partner, trusted friend, mentor, or caregiver while showering the victim with gifts and signs of affection in order to **win them over.**

The trafficker may use expensive gifts like **purses, cell phones, and meals** to build trust or create a sense of obligation, then later use those **'gifts' as leverage** (National Human Trafficking Hotline, n.d.).

Watch out for unusually expensive or out-of-place gifts that are not from parents or normal providers. These could be a **sign of grooming.**





2. CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDE

Very noticeable changes in a person's behavior or attitude could be a sign of grooming. While changes in mood or behavior can occur during adolescence, pay close attention if a young person's behavior or attitude changes **drastically for no apparent reason.**

Dig deeper to find out the **root causes** of these changes by considering questions like:

- Is the behavior change related to schoolwork?
- Is there drama with a friend?
- Are they being bullied?
- Did the change take place after new influences became involved?

3. NEW FRIENDS

Traffickers often connect with potential victims through s**ocial media** or by **“accidentally”** running into them in seemingly safe spaces like church or community events. Once an initial relationship is established, the trafficker will often **separate potential victims from those who are important to them** in order to gain control. When this happens, you may see a change in friend groups as the victim **pulls away from positive role models** and people they are familiar with (National Human Trafficking Hotline, n.d.).

Once a victim has been led into altering their friend group, the trafficker often forces them to **recruit other people** by befriending new potential victims in a similar manner. The trafficked victim may brag about **how wonderful their trafficker is** (often referring to them as an **older brother, an uncle or a boss**) and may invite potential victims to parties where the trafficker is introduced.

Watch out for changes in behavior and/or friend groups when someone new comes into a young person’s life, as it may be a **sign of grooming.**





4. DISCONNECTING

In addition to separating victims from people they love, traffickers will coerce them into **giving up the things they enjoy doing**, too. The trafficker's goal is to isolate victims from everything they are familiar with in order to exert **total control** and become the one thing the victim is dependent on and loves (National Human Trafficking Hotline, n.d.).

If a young person suddenly disengages from things they used to enjoy doing, such as hobbies, after-school activities, or friend groups, it could be a **sign of grooming.**

WHAT DO I DO IF I SEE THESE WARNING SIGNS IN SOMEONE I KNOW?

CALL THE NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

888-373-7888

Speak with a trained and experienced Anti-Trafficking Hotline Advocate to learn about the options and resources that are available.

24 Hours a Day · Confidential · Toll-Free Hotline

COURSE HIGHLIGHT: RED FLAGS

Red Flags is a comprehensive human trafficking awareness course offered by 3rd Millennium Classrooms, designed to help professionals recognize potential signs of human trafficking and better understand how exploitation can occur. It can be used as a training and awareness resource for professionals who may be in a position to identify and respond to potential trafficking situations.

An effective training and awareness tool, Red Flags explores the different forms of human trafficking, common myths and misconceptions, trafficking methods, and circumstances that may increase an individual's risk of exploitation. The course examines behavioral, communication, psychological, and health-related warning signs while helping participants better understand the barriers that can prevent victims from seeking help or leaving a trafficking situation. Participants also learn appropriate steps to take when they suspect trafficking may be occurring.

Available online, Red Flags provides a flexible way to complete human trafficking training from virtually anywhere. The course takes approximately two hours to complete and is available 24/7. **Eligible professionals can earn 2 CEUs upon completion, making Red Flags a practical option for professional development and continuing education.**

Interested in using Red Flags for professional development while earning 2 CEUs?
Visit 3rdmil.com or call us today for more information.

3rd Millennium CLASSROOMS

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References:

National Human Trafficking Hotline. (n.d.). Recognizing the signs. Polaris.

National Human Trafficking Hotline. (n.d.). Safety planning information. Polaris.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2024). Human Trafficking 101 information sheet. Blue Campaign.