

# UNMASKING

# Sexual Con Games

3rd Edition

Helping TEENS Avoid

EMOTIONAL GROOMING and DATING VIOLENCE

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# Introduction

*"If you love me, prove it."*

*"I'm going to make you feel good."*

*"You want it, you know you do."*

*"Just this once."*

*"What's the big deal? Everybody does it."*

**Language Can** be a powerful persuader. The term "con game" (confidence game) is defined as a swindle in which a person is defrauded after his or her confidence has been won.

When someone is tricked into a sexual encounter by what another person says, it is called a "sexual con game." Anyone who is coerced into a sexual experience has been defrauded both emotionally and physically.

This manual examines the kinds of words and behaviors that can be used to seduce, trick, or force teenagers into a sexual relationship. The more educated and aware our youth are about sexual con games, the more they will be able to "unmask" and avoid the con artist.

Depending on the context, the con artist can also be referred to as a "perpetrator," "predator," "player," or "groomer." Other slang terms include "pimp," "G man," "mac

daddy," and so on. There may be differences in the intensity of the physical or emotional relationship, but all con artists are guilty of creating coercive relationships. Some con artists knowingly manipulate and convince others to engage in sex. Some simply mimic the actions of the role models they have seen and are unaware of what healthy relationships are. Although these tactics can be used by anyone of any age, we will concentrate on helping teenagers become aware of how others may threaten or damage their healthy moral and sexual development.

This curriculum was first published for use with Boys Town High School students and taught within the context of a human

sexuality and relationship course. Many of these students had been sexually abused and emotionally manipulated by adults or other teenagers before coming to Boys Town. Due to their backgrounds, they were very familiar with the types of behavior described in this manual, and learned to recognize the ways sexual con artists had taken advantage of them.

Word spread quickly about the success of the curriculum and soon requests for training and materials were coming in from around the country. Teachers, counselors, youth ministers, and parents were finding that the information presented in the *Unmasking Sexual Con Games* curriculum was not only helpful to at-risk youth who had already been emotionally and sexually manipulated, but was also an effective preventive tool for teaching all teens about healthy and unhealthy relationships. Today the *Unmasking Sexual Con Games* materials are used in a variety of settings, from junior high and high school classrooms and church youth groups to detention centers, shelters, and residential group homes.

Sexual con games, harassment, or even sexual abuse can affect youth of any age, attending any school. It is not restricted to age, race, or gender. For example, a national survey conducted by researchers at Wellesley College's Center for Research on Women, published by *Seventeen* magazine and reprinted in *USA Today*, revealed startling rates of sexual harassment in our schools. More than 4,200 female students from grades 2 through 12 responded.

The survey found that of the respondents:

- 39 per cent had been harassed at school every day during the past year.
- 89 per cent had been subjected to sexual comments or gestures.
- 83 per cent had been touched or grabbed.
- When administrators or teachers were informed of the harassment, the school took action in only 55 per cent of the cases.

Many of the respondents also shared their personal experiences at school such as:

*"I've been sexually harassed for almost three years. One guy kept trying to feel me up and go down my pants in class. It breaks down your soul and brings you down mentally and physically."*

– 14-year-old, New Hampshire

*"There was a guy in my art class who thought it was his privilege to grab my butt whenever he wanted. Like a fool, I thought it was just 'flirting' or 'teasing' but it still made me feel dirty and violated. No human being should be subject to such degradation."*

– 15-year-old, Texas

*"My harassment came from one boy. Constantly. He was really into smacking my bottom, among other things, and always asking me to go to bed with him. I didn't want to go to school."*

– 14-year-old, Illinois

*"The guys would want you to let them touch you all over. The school and the principal wouldn't listen to me."*

– 13-year-old, Kansas

The information in this manual can help teens learn how to deal with people who attempt to harass or coerce them into sexual activity. We cannot turn our backs or close our eyes in the hope that sexual harassment and sexual con games will just “go away.” Teenagers will not just “grow out of it.” Manipulative boys are not just “being boys.” Manipulative girls are not just being “flirts.” Somehow, somewhere, many teenagers have lost the innocence of childhood and the joy that comes with healthy relationships. It is our responsibility to teach our teens what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Above all else, we must teach them that sexually using and abusing another person is morally and legally wrong and will not be tolerated.

The material contained in this manual can be a springboard for some very interesting and frank discussions about teenage sexuality. An open, yet disciplined classroom or discussion group can be a valuable forum for teens to learn about their own sexuality and how to avoid being used.

Some of the information in this leader’s manual is also included in the Teen’s Guide. Adult leaders and teachers should decide how the other information that is presented here should be used. While the content issues presented in the Leader Guide and the Teen’s Guide are the same, the wording in some sections may be different. Therefore, it is important that leaders read and become familiar with the material in both manuals before they begin a class.

Suggested lesson plans for leaders can be found in Chapter 10. Included in the lessons are excerpts from actual letters written by teenagers to other teenagers. The letters are used as examples to teach young people to

recognize the games played to convince them to have sex. The curriculum is broken down into sessions that focus on specific topics relating to the concepts described in this book. **It is strongly recommended that the information in this manual be used in a single-gender classroom. Many students could be uncomfortable discussing sensitive topics in front of the opposite gender.**

## Warning!

Some of the material in this manual is explicit and, therefore, controversial. In particular, some people may find the “grooming letters,” included in this manual for teacher reference and as a teaching activity, not appropriate for use with teens. Although many of the letters contain subtle grooming tactics, some contain language that is offensive and vulgar. The letters are not included for shock value, but to show the reality of the language heard and spoken by some of today’s teenagers. In some of the letters, the perpetrator’s con game will be obvious to adults. However, these same letters, when written to an unsuspecting and vulnerable teen, can be a potent enticement. (The letters are presented with original grammatical and spelling mistakes as well as sexual slang terms in order to retain their authenticity. Some graphic obscenities have been deleted or edited. Names have been changed.)

The manner in which you decide to use the letters and information in this manual is left to your judgment. Please be prudent. Some adult leaders prefer to pick and choose certain sections to use in their classrooms. Some adult leaders choose certain letters but delete any offensive language. Others use the curriculum in its entirety.

When deciding how to implement this curriculum, it's important to consider the age and developmental level of the students. Other crucial concerns could include a school administration's or youth organization's attitude toward the material, parental and community response, and the amount of cooperation adult leaders have from their students' parents.

One of the primary issues, however, centers on your own attitude and openness toward teaching students about exploitive sexual behavior. You have to be comfortable with the material and be able to present it in an open, caring, honest manner, without resorting to "scare tactics" or condemnation. Your intent should be to inform and guide your students, not moralize or preach. If presented properly, this curriculum can help young people learn about the cruel games sexual con artists play and how to avoid being used by such people.

Helping students learn about sexual matters is sometimes a delicate issue. But when the information is presented in an appropriate and sensitive manner, it can empower students with knowledge that will allow them to build healthy relationships and avoid the hurt and shame that results from being sexually used. This must begin with learning how the sexual con artist operates, thus unmasking the groomer's real intentions. Then the game and the groomer lose their power.