

Predatory Behavior

The predator begins by spending time building trust with the child. The predator's behaviors are calculated and planned from the beginning of the relationship with the child and his/her family. Once the "friendship" is gained, the predator may show any or all of the following behaviors.

The abuser

- Tells the child that he/she would never do anything to harm him/her.
- Breaks down the child's guard against inappropriate touching and sexual conduct.
- Threatens on occasion the victims and his/her family with harm.
- Engages the child in progressive discussions regarding sexual issues.
- Seeks out potential victims with family problems, poor peer relationships, and estrangement from parents.
- Seeks out potential victim on overnight trips, gives gifts, or focuses on the interests of potential victims.
- Prefers children as social companions rather than adult peers of his/her own age group.

Online predators use false information about themselves such as age, gender, lifestyle, personal background to lure unsuspecting children and youth. Due to the anonymity of the Internet, predators are provided with a better hiding place.

Actions to keep children and young people safe

As parents and caregivers it is important to keep children safe.

- Open the lines of communication... keep them open between you and your children.
- Talk with your children about predatory lures.
- Teach them to tell you about any scary or improper behavior that they encounter with others.
- Do not allow your child to participate in overnight trips or accept gifts from those who you do not trust.
- If your child does participate in overnight trips, be aware and receive information that explains itinerary, chaperones, sleeping arrangements.
- Become involved in your child's activities so that you will become more aware of the people in their lives.
- Attend child abuse prevention education sessions and learn all that you can to keep your children safe.

Communicate. .Communicate. .Communicate

Communication is the greatest dance of a lifetime. When it works we move in the direction we want to go. When it doesn't work we stumble, step on each other's toes, and struggle to move forward. Just like learning to dance, learning to communicate takes patience, skill, and practice.

- Communication is a balance between listening and speaking.
- Listening begins at the beginning.
- Communication is a combination of verbal and non-verbal transmission.
- During specific developmental windows communication patterns between parents and children change and can be difficult.
- During difficult times, listening is more important than speaking.
- Fear, anger, and anxiety are blockers to keeping the lines of communication open.
- Lying, manipulation, and disappointment can destroy relationships.
- Practice makes perfect.
- The prize is worth the attempt.