

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION! Part 1 of 5

Human Trafficking is a reality in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)! After attending a recent session, and based on some of the cases that are referred to me, I've decided to share some of this information to raise awareness and educate others. Change your attitude, and that will change your Life! "Just because something isn't happening to you, and you are not aware if it is happening to someone you know, doesn't mean it isn't happening." – Lisatnash!

(The Presenter was Juanita Maud Headley - Founder and CEO of Changing Cases and a Licensed New York Attorney, among many other things. Website: www.changingcases.org Feel free to check it out for more information.)

What is Sexual Exploitation?

According to <http://host.jibc.ca/seytookit/what.htm>, Sexual exploitation is the sexual abuse of children and youth through the exchange of sex or sexual acts for drugs, food, shelter, protection, other basics of life, and/or money. Sexual exploitation includes involving children and youth in creating pornography and sexually explicit websites. This is where human trafficking plays a role in recruiting the right candidates.

Have you ever heard of the term "Sexual Grooming" or just "Grooming"?

According to <http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/child-sexual-abuse-6-stages-of-grooming>, Grooming is the process by which an offender draws a potential victim into a sexual relationship and maintains that relationship in secrecy. The shrouding (hiding or keeping secret) of the relationship is an essential feature of grooming. Some of the steps used are mentioned in the article.

These things are very much a part of our society right here in Sweet T&T! Our lack of knowledge on the reality of how real this subject matter is, doesn't prevent it from happening. I'm encouraging and challenging you 'John Public' to be informed, so you can be a part of the solution. Let's go back to when raising our children was a community / village effort. As a neighbour, relative, family friend, etc. you are very important! We can't be everywhere all at once; but most times someone else is. Someone can see what you can't see simply because you weren't there. Let's not just turn a blind eye and PRETEND we are minding our own business.

We are aware of all the challenges that go with trying to address these issues, and we understand everyone will not be on board for varied reasons. However, let us not let that hinder us from stepping up to our responsibility – let us not let another be taken, abused, violated, groomed, etc. on our watch. Let's be the change we want to see; let it start with us. If it's already happened to you, then you know how it feels; don't let it happen to another.

****Please Note: The information contained in this article is intended only for general information, and is not to be used to diagnose a case or situation.****

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SEXUAL EXPOITATION! Part 2 of 5

This topic is as broad as it is deep. My intentions are to whet your appetite and peak your interest enough to get you to care, so you would get involved, research the information and act.

Here are some salient take-away points highlighted in the session:

- A predator or someone with bad intentions doesn't always have a look that sends up a red flag; many times they look better than some of us.
- Predators are both Male and Female. Potential victims are both Male and Female. It should also be noted that some females attack or target females, and some males attack or target males. Do not think they only attack or target their opposite sex.
- Many times predators are trusted people from many spheres of life. Gaining the trust of the potential victim is what fuels the success of the relationship. This causes the unsuspecting potential victim to co-operate willingly. However, there are also cases where potential victims are taken violently and against their will, kicking and screaming. It all depends on how much time the predator has.
- Some predators are very patient and deliberate, and can groom a potential victim for years without them being able to recognize it. This is why education on this topic needs to be increased.
- They pretend to be nice, caring, show an interest in the potential victim, develop trust, etc.
- They always try to isolate (separate) and control the potential victim and they sexualize (make sexual; attribute sex or a sex role to) the relationship. They try to teach the potential victims what is acceptable sexual behavior as they groom them for what lies ahead.
- Ages vary both among the predators and the potential victims.
- Predators observe and choose their victims; however they can also just make a spur of the moment decision based on the need.

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SEXUAL EXPLOITATION! Part 3 of 5

Some possible ways to guard yourself, and some things that predators use and see as red flags for an open invitation:

- Pictures – when posting pictures of yourself, ask yourself, ‘What message is this picture sending?’ When you answer yourself, then ask yourself, ‘Is this the message I want to send?’ BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF!
- Dress – The way you dress or undress yourself. Again, ask yourself, ‘What message am I sending?’ When you answer yourself, then ask yourself, ‘Is this the message I want to send?’ BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF!
- General posture – this is all inclusive and not just referring to how upright you may sit. It goes deeper into how much self-confidence you reflect, and the messages you speak without words – your non-verbal messages. So for example, (just an example): you don’t feel good about yourself, so you’re always walking around with your head lowered to the ground, moping and in a corner. To a predator, they see the void and vulnerability, and present themselves as a friend, a listening ear, a caring hug, etc. Now while you may really be in need of these emotional connections, you don’t need it from them; the cost is very devastating and life changing.
- Personal information – If you are always posting detailed information about you (address: home, work, family, etc.; relationship issues, and the like), your whereabouts (just checked in at...), status: having nothing to do; feeling bored, etc.
- Know what ‘LOVE’ is! Love is patient, kind, etc. – 1 Corinthians 13. This will help you to know that someone who is controlling you, forcing against your will, keeping tabs on your, showering you with gifts in exchange for something, isolating you from friend and family, etc. is not love.
- Know your people – Red Flags: Someone never wants to meet your family. They always want everything to be just between you & them. Sudden interest in you.
- Ask questions – Who are you? What do you want? Check out motives and intent. Talk to God; Trust your gut.

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SEXUAL EXPOITATION! Part 4 of 5

How can you help?

- **Have a Heart:** Sometimes we think in order to help we have to be educated, trained with letters behind our names, recognized by societal stands, etc.; in this case all you need to start is to CARE! Have a low tolerance for injustice and advantage.
- **Be informed:** Do research, attend any sessions being held, tell others / share, have numbers for the relevant institutions at hand, etc.
- **Be observant:** Know what to look for and be on the lookout, but try not to become paranoid (overly suspicious).
- **Be trustworthy:** Strive to be someone who is approachable and can be trusted.
- **Know when to speak and when to be silent:** You should be someone who understands the power and importance of confidentiality. You also need to know when you must speak out to intervene in a situation in the best interest of the individual involved.
- **Do not be judgmental:** Understand that most times what we encounter from people's behaviour are only the symptoms; there is always a root cause. So don't judge the promiscuous behavior you may see being displaced; rather be empathetic. Try to put yourself in the person's situation and see how you can help. If you can't help / heal, don't hurt – don't do things that would make the situation worse than you met it. See the bigger picture.
- **Speak out / Act / Make a difference:** Always ask yourself, "If it were me?" If the tables were turned and you or someone you care dearly about were the person kidnapped, being robbed, being molested, etc., would you be glad someone intervened or would you have preferred they 'mind their own business'? Every person is important!

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SEXUAL EXPOITATION! Part 5 of 5

Some things to expect?

- Don't Expect: Act because you care, it is the right thing to do and you'd like it done for you if the tables were turned; not because you are expecting something in return.
- People, including the victim or potential victim will not always be pleased and thankful for your intervention. You may seem like the bad guys at times.
- Some cases will not be easy, straightforward and cut and dry.
- We don't perceive things the same way, and therefore empathy, patience, open-mindedness, guidance, wisdom and understanding are key.

Additional Information:

- One local article: <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/How-to-spot-a-human-trafficking-victim-296222571.html>
- Movies: Taken (2008); Sold (2016)

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