
WORKBOOK

Breaking the Code of Grooming

The Companion Workbook

A guided workbook for parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, pastors, and every caring adult

Based on the book by Don Samuel Meredith and Jessica Holland

A Share the Signal resource | SharetheSignal.com

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is not meant to be read once and put on a shelf. It is meant to be written in, dog-eared, photographed, and returned to over months and years.

You can work through it three ways:

1. **Alongside the book.** Each section pairs with a chapter. Read the chapter, then complete the corresponding workbook pages.
2. **As a family tool.** The conversation planners and tripwire worksheets are designed to be used over time, not in one sitting.
3. **As a group study.** Small groups, church groups, PTAs, and staff trainings can use the discussion questions in each section.

A note before you begin: Nothing in this workbook is designed to create fear. The goal is recognition, preparation, and conversation. Panic rarely protects anyone. Recognition does.

Part One: Understanding the Pattern

Section 1 | Before the Phone Ever Rang

Pairs with Chapters 1 to 3

KEY IDEA

Awareness work rarely starts with expertise. It starts with ordinary people who decide to pay attention and act.

REFLECT

1. Before picking up this book, what did you believe human trafficking looked like? Where did those beliefs come from?

2. The author writes that most trafficking begins long before anyone calls it trafficking. What surprised you most about that idea?

3. Pastor Jack said "That's outreach." Who in your life or community might be quietly carrying a story no one has ever asked about?

TAKE ONE STEP

Write the name of one person or organization in your community already doing prevention or family support work. Commit to learning what they do this month.

Name:

What I will do:

Section 2 | The Pattern

Pairs with Chapters 4 to 6

KEY IDEA

Grooming almost never begins with force. It begins with attention, connection, and someone meeting a real emotional need. It progresses the way the sun sets: gradually, until daylight has become darkness.

THE PROGRESSION

Fill in the sequence described in the book, in your own words:

Trust becomes _____

Dependence becomes _____

Isolation becomes _____

REFLECT

1. Why does grooming rarely feel like grooming to the person experiencing it?

2. The book compares predators to practiced pickpockets. What does that comparison tell you about how deliberate the process is?

3. "We didn't realize what was happening until we looked back." What makes patterns easier to see in hindsight than in the moment?

THE SLOW FADE CHECKLIST

The book describes subtle changes families often notice only in retrospect. Check any you have seen in a young person you care about. One check is not proof of anything. Several together deserve a closer look and a calm conversation.

- ☐ Increased secrecy around phone, apps, or conversations
- ☐ Conversations that stop when an adult enters the room
- ☐ Longtime friends quietly disappearing
- ☐ New relationships the family has never met
- ☐ One person's opinion mattering more than everyone else's
- ☐ Pulling away from family activities that used to be normal
- ☐ A sense that something has changed that you cannot quite name

If you checked several boxes, turn to the Break Glass Plan in Part Four.

Section 3 | The Voices

Pairs with Chapters 7 to 10: Omaha Mom, Cassie, and Amber

KEY IDEA

Grooming does not begin by convincing someone they are worthless. It begins by convincing them they are finally worth something.

REFLECT

1. Julie searched for her daughter for years without giving up. What did her story teach you about how trafficking wounds entire families, not just one person?

2. Cassie said she loved the attention and validation, and began to believe she was special. What healthy sources of validation exist in the life of each young person you care about? Where might there be gaps?

3. Amber said, "When the money is gone, all that's left is the pain." Why is prevention at the beginning of the story so much more powerful than intervention at the end?

THE BETTER QUESTION

The book replaces "Why didn't they just leave?" with a better question: **"What need was someone pretending to fill?"**

Think of the young people in your life. For each one, write the emotional needs that feel strongest for them right now (belonging, being noticed, feeling capable, feeling understood, independence, romance, significance).

YOUNG PERSON	STRONGEST NEEDS RIGHT NOW	HEALTHY PLACES THOSE NEEDS ARE BEING MET

The point of this table is not suspicion. It is awareness. A need that is being met in healthy ways is a need a manipulator cannot easily exploit.

Section 4 | I Matter

Pairs with Chapter 11

KEY IDEA

The need to matter is not the problem. The problem is a counterfeit version of love offered by someone with selfish motives. Healthy love strengthens a person's other relationships. Counterfeit love slowly tries to replace them.

REFLECT

1. "I see you. I understand you. You're special." These words are beautiful in healthy relationships and dangerous in unhealthy ones. What is the difference?

2. How can you help a young person tell the difference between kindness that builds them and kindness that slowly begins to possess them?

THE LITMUS TEST

Teach this simple test and write it somewhere your family will see it:

Healthy love makes your world bigger. Counterfeit love makes your world smaller.

Ask: Is this relationship adding people, activities, and confidence to their life, or removing them?

Part Two: The Twelve Tripwires Worksheets

Pairs with Chapter 12 and Appendix A

A tripwire is not an accusation and not proof. It is a quiet internal pause that says, "Something about this deserves a second look." Work through one tripwire per week as a family, or use these pages when a specific concern arises.

For each tripwire below:

- **Recognize it:** the pattern in plain language
 - **My notes:** what, if anything, you have observed
 - **The conversation:** the starter question from the book
 - **Break Glass moment:** the point where a pause becomes action
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Tripwire 1: Excessive Special Attention

Someone becomes unusually invested in a young person. Healthy adults build trust with families, not secrecy with children.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "What do you enjoy about spending time with them?"

Break Glass moment: When attention begins replacing healthy friendships.

Tripwire 2: Growing Secrecy

Texts, apps, or conversations become hidden. Healthy relationships survive openness.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Why does this need to stay secret?"

Break Glass moment: If secrecy becomes a condition of the relationship.

Tripwire 3: Isolation

Time with family and trusted friends steadily decreases. Isolation removes healthy perspectives.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Who have you stopped spending time with?"

Break Glass moment: When one relationship crowds out all others.

Tripwire 4: Emotional Dependency

One person's opinion matters above everyone else's. Dependency creates vulnerability.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Who else can you talk to about this?"

Break Glass moment: When approval from one person controls emotions.

Tripwire 5: Gifts With Strings

Kindness begins creating obligation. Real generosity expects nothing back.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Do you feel like you owe them something?"

Break Glass moment: When gifts become leverage.

Tripwire 6: Rapid Escalation

The relationship moves unusually fast. Trust normally grows over time.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Does this feel rushed?"

Break Glass moment: When intimacy outpaces familiarity.

Tripwire 7: Testing Boundaries

Small inappropriate requests become normal over time.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "How did that request make you feel?"

Break Glass moment: When uncomfortable requests increase.

Tripwire 8: Flattery

Compliments become emotional hooks. Constant validation can become manipulation.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Do you feel accepted only by them?"

Break Glass moment: When identity depends on their praise.

Tripwire 9: Division

"Nobody understands you like I do." Healthy adults strengthen families.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Has anyone encouraged you to pull away from us?"

Break Glass moment: When trusted adults are portrayed as enemies.

Tripwire 10: Secret Keeping

Loyalty is measured by silence. Healthy relationships welcome honesty.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "What would happen if you told me?"

Break Glass moment: When silence becomes mandatory.

Tripwire 11: Guilt or Fear

Affection turns into pressure. Control replaces kindness.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "Do you ever feel afraid to disappoint them?"

Break Glass moment: When fear becomes the motivator.

Tripwire 12: Trust Your Instincts

Something simply feels wrong. Instinct deserves investigation.

MY NOTES

Conversation starter: "What is your gut telling you?"

Break Glass moment: When your internal alarm will not quiet.

Tripwire Review Page

Date completed:

Tripwires where I noted a concern:

Am I seeing one isolated flag or several connecting flags?

If several are connecting, my next step is the Break Glass Plan (Part Four).

Part Three: The Conversation Planner

Pairs with Chapter 14 and Appendix B

The strongest tripwires are built over years, through hundreds of small conversations. Lectures close doors. Curiosity opens them. Use these planners to make the conversations natural, not scheduled interrogations.

THE GOLDEN RULES

1. Listen more than you speak.
2. Use ordinary moments: the car, the dinner table, after a movie or news story.
3. Never punish honesty. The goal is permission, not perfection.
4. Repeat often. One big talk is less effective than hundreds of small ones.
5. End with the message: "Nothing you could ever tell me would make me stop loving you."

Planner: Ages 8 to 10

BOOK QUESTIONS TO WEAVE IN OVER TIME

- Who are the safe adults in your life?
- Has anyone ever asked you to keep a secret from us?
- What would you do if someone online wanted to become your special friend?

My child's answers and my observations:

Natural moments this month where a conversation could happen (car rides, bedtime, shows we watch together):

Planner: Ages 11 to 13

BOOK QUESTIONS TO WEAVE IN OVER TIME

- How do you decide whether someone online is trustworthy?
- Has anyone made you uncomfortable without obviously doing something wrong?
- What would make you tell us immediately?

My child's answers and my observations:

Natural moments this month:

Planner: Ages 14 to 18

BOOK QUESTIONS TO WEAVE IN OVER TIME

- What does a healthy relationship look like?
- Have you ever seen someone become isolated because of a relationship?
- How can kindness slowly become manipulation?

My teen's answers and my observations:

Natural moments this month:

Planner: Young Adults

BOOK QUESTIONS TO WEAVE IN OVER TIME

- What are the earliest warning signs of emotional control?
- How do you help a friend who may be getting groomed?
- Who is your first call if your instincts say something is wrong?

Notes from our conversations:

Natural moments this month:

Conversation Log

Track the small conversations. Patterns show up over time.

DATE	SETTING	WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT	WHAT I NOTICED

Part Four: The Break Glass Plan

Pairs with Chapter 13 and Appendix E

A tripwire whispers. A Break Glass moment is when the small concerns begin connecting with one another and waiting is no longer the safest choice. This is not a moment of panic. It is a moment of courage.

Step 1: Name What You Are Seeing

List the specific observations, not conclusions. ("Her phone is never out of reach" rather than "She's hiding something.")

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Step 2: Connect With Other Caring Adults

No one person sees everything, but each one sees something. Who else is in this child's community, and what might they have noticed?

PERSON	ROLE (TEACHER, COACH, GRANDPARENT)	WHAT THEY MAY HAVE OBSERVED

Step 3: Move Toward the Child, Not Away

Plan the conversation before you have it.

Where and when will it happen (calm, private, unhurried)?

My opening question (curious, not accusing):

What I will NOT do: lecture, threaten, shame, or demand answers on the spot.

The message I will make sure they hear: "Nothing you could ever tell me would make me stop loving you."

Step 4: Know Your Next Calls

Fill this in now, before you ever need it.

Trusted adult or family ally: _____

School counselor: _____

Local law enforcement non-emergency line: _____

National Human Trafficking Hotline: _____

Local child advocacy center: _____

Share the Signal resources: **SharetheSignal.com**

BREAK GLASS QUICK REFERENCE

When something does not feel right:

- Pause.
- Ask another question.
- Do not ignore secrecy.
- Trust your instincts.
- Talk to a trusted adult.
- Remember: asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Part Five: It Takes a Community

Pairs with Chapter 15

REFLECT

1. "No one had the whole picture. One person noticed withdrawal. Another noticed secrecy." Who makes up the community around each young person in your life?

2. Noticing is one of the purest expressions of love. What would it look like for you to be a noticer in your role (parent, teacher, coach, pastor, neighbor)?

COMMUNITY MAPPING EXERCISE

For one young person you care about, map their circle of caring adults:

Family

School

Sports and activities

Faith community

Neighbors and family friends

Now ask: If something changed in this child's life, which of these adults would notice first? Which would I hear from? Are there gaps?

Part Six: Healing and Hope

Pairs with Chapters 16 and 17

KEY IDEA

Healing is not a straight line. It is measured not by never struggling again, but by refusing to stop moving forward.

REFLECT

1. If you are supporting someone who has experienced grooming or exploitation, what does faithful presence look like this month, in practical terms?

2. The book says scars can stop telling people who they are and start reminding them of their courage. What does that reframe mean to you?

My Commitment Page

The book ends with a charge: don't let it end here.

This month I will:

- ☐ Have one unhurried conversation with a young person I love
- ☐ Share one thing I learned with another parent or caring adult
- ☐ Fill in my Break Glass contact list
- ☐ Revisit one tripwire worksheet
- ☐ Learn what prevention resources exist in my community

Signed

Date

Notes

Open space for anything that does not fit in the worksheets — observations, dates, conversations, questions to come back to.

Notes

If You Only Remember Ten Things

1. Grooming almost always begins with trust, not force.
2. Most victims never see grooming while it is happening.
3. Your instincts matter. If something feels wrong, slow down and ask questions.
4. Secrets are one of the strongest early warning signs.
5. Predators often isolate before they exploit.
6. Children should know about grooming before someone attempts it.
7. Hundreds of small conversations are more effective than one big lecture.
8. The goal is not to create fear. It is to build recognition and confidence.
9. If someone reaches out for help, listen first. Your response may shape the rest of their life.
10. One informed parent can change the future of an entire family.

Recognition comes before protection.

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