

BREAKING THE CODE OF GROOMING

THE COACHING PLAYBOOK



RECOGNIZE • SUPPORT • PROTECT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS,
COACHES, AND MENTORS

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sharethesignals.com

A NOTE TO THE YOUNG WOMAN HOLDING THIS BOOK

The moment you notice is the moment leadership begins

Most people think leadership begins when someone gives you a title. Often, it begins sooner - when you notice that a friend is not herself and decide not to look away.

You know your friends in a way adults often do not. You hear the joke that lands wrong. You notice the new name that keeps appearing on her phone. You see when attention starts to feel like pressure, when excitement turns into secrecy, or when someone who used to speak freely begins checking every word.

That closeness gives you something powerful: an early view of change. It does not make you a detective, a therapist, or a rescuer. It makes you a **coach** - someone who can recognize a pattern, ask a steady question, listen without blame, and help a friend reach a safe adult.

“We will never catch up with all of the people being trafficked, but maybe we can slow the number of those going into it.”

JULIE - SURVIVOR AND AUTHOR OF *SHADOWED*

Your goal is not to prove grooming. Your goal is to make it easier for someone to tell the truth. You do not need perfect words. You need courage, calm, and a plan. This playbook gives you all three.

WHAT SHE NEEDS TO HEAR

I see you. Your feelings matter. You are not in trouble. We can take the next safe step together.

Remember: You may be the first person who notices. You do not have to be the only person who acts.

BUILT FOR A REAL MOMENT

Read it once. Practice it together. Keep the lines that sound like you.

See it

Notice changes, patterns, pressure, secrecy, isolation, and boundary testing.

Get it

Understand the need or pressure beneath a choice before judging the choice.

Say something

Move toward her. Ask one honest question. Listen. Add safe adult help.

This is a conversation guide, not a test. You are allowed to sound like yourself.

For a young coach

- ☐ Mark the sentences you would really say.
- ☐ Practice the second question with a partner.
- ☐ Name two safe adults before you need them.
- ☐ Keep the emergency page easy to find.

For an adult leader

- ☐ Teach your organization's reporting path first.
- ☐ Never leave a young coach holding a disclosure alone.
- ☐ Adapt examples to age and setting.
- ☐ Debrief without turning a peer's story into group discussion.

Adult-supported from the start

This guide prepares peers to notice, connect, and refer. It does not transfer safeguarding responsibility from adults to young people. Local law and organizational policy always govern reporting.

EDITORIAL STATUS

This is a combined working manuscript for Don Meredith and Jessica Holland. Before publication or use with a youth group, the safety, reporting, legal, and trauma guidance should be reviewed by qualified professionals and tested with young readers.

THE PATH

From noticing to a safe next step

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WHAT AN EFFECTIVE COACH ACTUALLY DOES

Your role is small enough to be safe - and strong enough to matter

Grooming is designed to confuse. A person may look caring while building secrecy, dependence, isolation, or control.

1 / RECOGNIZE**Notice the pattern**

Look for changes, pressure, secrecy, special treatment, and boundary testing. Notice before you name.

2 / CONNECT**Open the door**

Ask calm questions. Listen without shock, blame, or demands. Make conversation two more likely.

3 / REFER**Add safe adult help**

Bring in a trusted, trained adult. Stay beside your friend without becoming the whole safety plan.

A coach does not

- ☐ Investigate or try to trap someone.
- ☐ Confront a person who may be dangerous.
- ☐ Pressure a friend for every detail.
- ☐ Ask to see or forward sexual images.
- ☐ Promise to keep danger secret.
- ☐ Become her only support.

“I cannot promise to keep danger secret. I can promise I will not leave you alone while we get help.”

The coaching standard: Leave someone with more clarity, more choices, and more safe connection.

This is peer support, not therapy, investigation, or a substitute for child protection procedures. When safety may be at risk, adult responsibility begins.

PAUSE HERE

What if this is happening to you?

Learning the signs can make you recognize something in your own life. If it does, you do not have to become your own coach.

Maybe someone gives you attention that feels wonderful and heavy at the same time. Maybe you are managing a person's moods, hiding messages, accepting gifts you did not ask for, or worrying about what will happen if you pull away. Maybe you have been telling yourself, "I can handle it."

You are not weak for wanting attention, belonging, love, opportunity, or help. A normal need never gives another person permission to pressure, isolate, threaten, or control you.

Try your own freedom check

- ☐ Can I say no without being punished, threatened, blamed, or abandoned?
- ☐ Can I spend time with other people without paying for it later?
- ☐ Am I asked to hide the relationship from people who care about me?
- ☐ Do I feel more like myself - or more responsible for managing this person's reactions?
- ☐ If a friend described this exact situation, what would I want for her?

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Choose one safe adult and say: **"Something in this book sounds like my situation. I need you to listen before you react."** If the first adult does not help, tell another.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911 or your local emergency number. U.S. support options appear on page 20.



THE COACH MOVE

Notice the change. Don't invent the story.

Something feels different. That matters. It does not mean you already know why. Warning signs can have many explanations, and ordinary teenage stress can look similar. Your job is to move closer with care, not reach a verdict.

You notice

- ☐ She is quieter, anxious, or withdrawn.
- ☐ A new person takes up all her attention.
- ☐ There are new gifts, rides, or privileges.
- ☐ She drops people or activities she loved.
- ☐ Her phone makes her tense or afraid.
- ☐ She has less freedom and more secrets.

Don't jump to

AVOID

"She's being groomed."

AVOID

"He's a predator."

AVOID

"She's making terrible choices."

TRY

"Hey, you seem a little different lately. You good?"

IF SHE SAYS 'I'M FINE'

"Okay. Just checking. I'm around."

What you are doing: Opening a door without pushing her through it.

Sudden behavior change, secrecy, unexplained gifts, isolation, excessive digital communication, and an older relationship can be warning signs, but no single sign proves grooming. Look for change and pattern, then seek qualified adult help.

A MOMENT, NOT A LABEL

Vulnerability does not mean weakness

A manipulator does not need someone to be “the vulnerable type.” Sometimes all it takes is a season when a normal need becomes urgent.

Moments to notice

- ☐ A breakup or friendship collapse
- ☐ Moving or joining a new group
- ☐ Conflict at home
- ☐ Grief, rejection, or embarrassment
- ☐ Pressure to perform or please
- ☐ A sudden hunger for opportunity

What exploitation may offer

- ☐ Instant belonging
- ☐ Constant compliments
- ☐ Secret status
- ☐ Money, gifts, rides, or access
- ☐ Someone who says, “Only I understand you”
- ☐ Relief that becomes obligation

“Predators don't create those emotional needs. They discover them.”

Julie called that line “very spot-on.” A normal need is not the danger; someone exploiting it is.

A good coach never turns vulnerability into a label. She protects dignity. She notices the opening without blaming the person who has the need.

A QUESTION THAT CHANGES THE CONVERSATION

“When you are with this person - or when they message you - do you feel more like yourself, or do you feel like you have to manage their reactions?”

Short-term vulnerability can follow a move, bereavement, family or peer difficulty, or dependence on someone for advancement. Any young person can be targeted.

THE STRONGEST RECURRING QUESTION

Ask what happens when she says no

Charm can be staged. Respect becomes visible when someone hears a boundary they do not like.

The question is not only, “Is this person nice?” The question is, “What happens when you say no?”

Freedom sounds like

- ☐ “Okay.”
- ☐ “Take your time.”
- ☐ “You choose.”
- ☐ “You can see your friends.”
- ☐ “You don’t owe me.”

Control may sound like

- ☐ “After all I’ve done for you?”
- ☐ “If you loved me, you would.”
- ☐ “Don’t tell them. They won’t get it.”
- ☐ “Answer me now.”
- ☐ “You’ll regret embarrassing me.”

Five ways to ask without sounding like an investigator

Direct: “What happens when you tell them no?”

Gentle: “Do you feel like you can slow things down without drama?”

Friend version: “Would they still want you there if you didn’t do it?”

Relationship version: “What are they like when they don’t get what they want?”

Digital version: “What happens if you don’t answer right away?”

QUESTION ONE

What happens when you say no?

QUESTION TWO

Does this person make your world bigger or smaller?

Healthy relationships encourage independence. Grooming creates dependence.



THE FIRST 90 SECONDS

Before she hears your advice, she sees your face

If you look shocked, angry, disgusted, or ready to take over, she may stop talking. Calm is not pretending nothing matters. Calm tells her she can keep speaking.

1

Stay normal.

Slow down. Breathe. Keep your face steady.

2

Say what you saw.

"You haven't seemed like yourself lately."

3

Leave room.

"I could be wrong."

4

Ask one question.

Then stop talking.

5

Don't try to win.

Help her see it for herself.

6

Leave a way back.

"You can always come back to me."

THE GOAL

Conversation one does not have to solve everything. Make conversation two more likely.

A clean opening

"Can we talk for a minute? I care about you. I've noticed you seem stressed after those messages. I could be reading it wrong. What's going on?"

GOOD COACHES STAY CURIOUS

The first answer is often automatic

“Fine.” “Nothing.” “He's nice.” “Everybody does it.” “I can handle it.” The second question is where the real conversation can begin.

“I'm fine.”

“Okay. What's been the hardest part of your week?”

“He's nice to me.”

“What's he like when he doesn't get what he wants?”

“I can handle it.”

“I believe you. What part is hardest to handle?”

“It's not a big deal.”

“Maybe not. Does any part of it make you uncomfortable?”

“Don't tell anyone.”

“What are you afraid will happen if someone knows?”

“You just don't understand.”

“You're right - I might not yet. Help me understand what matters most to you.”

COACH SKILL

Ask one more. Then listen long enough for the honest answer to arrive.

What a second question is not

It is not a cross-examination. Do not fire five questions in a row. Do not demand proof. One thoughtful question plus a real pause is enough.

THE QUESTION ALMOST EVERY COACH WILL ASK

What if I'm wrong about him?

You do not need to decide who he is. You need to notice what is happening to your friend.

Maybe you misread the situation. Maybe there is an explanation. That possibility matters - and it is exactly why a coach asks questions instead of making accusations.

HOLD ON TO THIS

You can be wrong about the person and still be right to pay attention to the pattern.

Name what you noticed - not what you think he is

DON'T SAY

"He's a predator." "He's grooming you." "Everybody needs to know."

TRY

"I may be reading this wrong, but I've noticed you seem afraid to disappoint him. Are you okay?"

THEN ASK

"What happens when you say no?"

Keep concern from becoming a rumor

- ☐ Talk privately with your friend.
- ☐ Share the concern with one safe adult who can help.
- ☐ Describe what you saw or heard. Do not add a label you cannot prove.
- ☐ Do not post, group-text, investigate, or confront him yourself.

If you were wrong

Say, "I'm glad you're okay. I asked because I care." Then stop. Do not defend the worry or repeat the story.

If you were right

Your calm question may be the first safe opening she has had. Listen, stay beside her, and bring in a safe adult.

Uncertainty changes your language. It does not require silence.

If there are threats, sexual images, a planned meeting, or immediate danger, get adult or emergency help now - even when you do not have the whole story.

SHE SAYS

“He's the only one who gets me.”

Do not make her choose between you and him. If you attack the relationship, she may spend the whole conversation defending it.

DON'T

“He's manipulating you.”

TRY

“What is it about him that makes you feel understood?”

THEN ASK

“Does he still understand you when you disagree with him?”

ONE MORE

“What happens when you tell him no?”

If she defends him

“I hear that he matters to you. I'm not asking you to decide everything right now. I'm asking whether you feel free, safe, and able to say no without consequences.”

If she says you are jealous

“I get why it could sound that way. I don't need you to choose me. I want to know you still get to choose for yourself.”

If she shuts down

“Okay. I won't push. If anything starts feeling heavy, strange, or scary, you can come back. I mean that.”

WHY THIS WORKS

You are not telling her what to think. You are giving her something worth thinking about.

HE MAY LOOK LIKE THE ANSWER

A groomer may create the wound and then return as the “savior.” Julie said the man who trafficked her first seemed to be rescuing her - she thought of him as a “guardian angel.” Grooming may feel like protection long before it feels like fear.

Coach move: Do not argue about whether he looks dangerous. Ask whether she is becoming freer, safer, and more connected - or more dependent, afraid, and alone.

ISOLATION

When your friend starts disappearing

She stops coming around. Drops the sport. Leaves the group chat. Old friends become “annoying.” One person starts taking up all the space.

DON'T

Talk about her with everybody else. Do not organize a group confrontation.

GO FIND HER

“Hey, you've kind of disappeared on us. Everything okay?”

IF SHE SHRUGS

“Okay. I miss you. Just wanted you to know that.”

LATER

“Do you still feel like you can hang out with whoever you want?”

Do not compete for her. Remind her that her world can stay big.

Ways to keep connection alive

- ☐ Invite her without making her explain every absence.
- ☐ Keep normal friendship in the mix - music, lunch, a walk, practice, homework.
- ☐ Do not punish her for going back to the relationship.
- ☐ Do not become her only person; help widen her circle.
- ☐ If you are worried about safety, tell a trusted adult even if she is not ready to agree.

Leadership may look ordinary: sitting beside the person who is slowly disappearing from the room.

PRESSURE, ATTENTION, GIFTS

Ask what the “yes” is costing her

“Everybody does it.”

Pictures. DMs. Parties. Vaping. Drinking. Sex. A private account. Sometimes the pressure is not “Do this.” It is “Do this or you won’t belong.”

TRY

“Maybe a lot of people do. Do you actually want to?”

THEN

“Would they still want you there if you didn’t?”

Older attention

Older does not automatically mean dangerous. But age, status, money, opportunity, and authority can change how free a choice really is.

ASK

“What do you like about the attention?”

THEN

“Do they ask you to hide things from people who care about you?”

Gifts and favors

Rides. Food. Clothes. Money. Tickets. A place to stay. Help can be generous. It can also create a debt she never agreed to.

TRY

“Do you ever feel like you owe them something?”

Opportunity

A coach, leader, employer, teacher, influencer, or mentor may control access she values.

ASK

“Can you disagree without losing the opportunity?”

A gift is not permission. A favor is not ownership. Belonging should not require self-betrayal.

THE PHONE IS NOT ALWAYS THE PROBLEM

Digital pressure lives in the relationship behind the screen

A phone can hold friendship, romance, status, embarrassment, threats, images, location, and secrets. Do not interrogate the device. Notice the effect.

You notice

- ☐ She panics when it buzzes.
- ☐ Someone expects immediate replies.
- ☐ She deletes constantly.
- ☐ Someone wants passwords or location.
- ☐ She is asked to move chats to another app.
- ☐ Someone wants pictures, proof, or secrecy.

You can ask

“You look stressed every time your phone goes off. Somebody making things hard for you?”

“What happens if you don't answer?”

“Do you feel free to leave the chat?”

If an image is being used as leverage

Do not blame her. Do not ask her to send it to you. Do not forward, download, or use it to investigate. Bring in a safe adult immediately and use the reporting routes on page 20.

“You are not in trouble. We are going to get help. You do not have to handle the threat alone.”

An adult asking a minor for sexual images, or anyone threatening to share sexual images, needs immediate adult and professional attention.

WHEN SHE TELLS YOU

Do not make her regret telling you

A disclosure may arrive in one sentence, in pieces, or wrapped in doubt. Your first job is to make the next truthful sentence feel possible.

FIRST

“Thank you for telling me.”

THEN

“I’m glad you came to me.”

IF SHE IS ASHAMED

“You don’t have to make yourself look good before you ask me for help.”

IF SHE MADE A MISTAKE

“Okay. We deal with what happens next.”

IF SHE BLAMES HERSELF

“What happened is not your fault.”

IF YOU NEED HELP TOO

“I care about you too much to carry this alone. I’m going with you.”

Keep your response steady

- ☐ Believe the feeling and take the safety concern seriously.
- ☐ Do not push for a complete timeline or fill in gaps.
- ☐ Do not make her calm you down.
- ☐ Do not promise a specific outcome you cannot control.
- ☐ Explain what you need to do next and stay beside her.

The rule

Safety first. Lessons later.

You can talk about decisions, digital habits, or boundaries later. The moment she tells you is not the moment for a lecture.

PROTECT THE STORYTELLER

Do not ask her to retell the story for a group, a lesson, or somebody’s inspiration. Bring in the designated adult, share only what safety requires, and let qualified professionals limit unnecessary repetition.

BOUNDARIES MAKE HELP SAFER

Helping does not mean carrying somebody else's crisis by yourself

Your job

- ☐ Notice.
- ☐ Get close.
- ☐ Listen.
- ☐ Stay with her.
- ☐ Add safe adult help.

Not your job

- ☐ Investigate.
- ☐ Confront someone dangerous.
- ☐ Keep a dangerous secret.
- ☐ Collect evidence.
- ☐ Become her only support.

“I care about you too much to carry this by myself. I'm going with you. We're getting somebody who knows how to help.”

When it gets big

Bring in a trusted parent or caregiver, school counselor, safeguarding lead, teacher, coach, youth leader, clergy member, qualified professional, child-protection agency, or law enforcement - depending on urgency, local law, and policy.

Never confront the suspected person yourself. Confrontation can increase risk, destroy evidence, trigger retaliation, or cut off the young person's access to help.

Privacy is not secrecy. Share only with people responsible for safety. Do not turn the story into gossip, a prayer-chain detail, a team discussion, or a lesson for other young people.



A SAFE ADULT CARRIES RESPONSIBILITY

Bring in help without disappearing

The 30-second bridge script

“I’m worried about a pattern involving my friend. There may be secrecy, pressure, boundary crossing, or fear. I’m not trying to investigate. I need you to help us follow the right safety steps.”

Make the handoff human

- 1 **Tell her what you need to do.**
“I need to bring in an adult who can protect you.”
- 2 **Offer choices where choices are safe.**
“Would you rather start with Ms. Lee or Coach Ramirez?”
- 3 **Go with her.**
Sit beside her or help her make the call.
- 4 **Keep normal connection.**
Check in later without asking for private case details.

A bridge is not a handoff into silence. The adult takes responsibility; the friend can still offer steady, ordinary connection.

ACT NOW WHEN SAFETY MAY BE IMMEDIATE

Danger, threats, sexual images, or a planned meeting need adult action now

Get immediate help when

- ☐ Someone is in immediate danger.
- ☐ A threatening or uncertain meeting is planned.
- ☐ There are threats of violence, self-harm, retaliation, or blackmail.
- ☐ An adult requests sexual contact or sexual images from a minor.
- ☐ Sexual images of a minor are created, shared, or used as leverage.

Protect the young coach too

- ☐ Do not confront the person.
- ☐ Do not request, open, copy, or forward sexual images.
- ☐ Do not conduct a sting.
- ☐ Do not post about it.
- ☐ Stay with a trusted adult and follow professional direction.

Emergency

Immediate danger: Call 911 or local law enforcement.

Online child sexual exploitation

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children CyberTipline: report online or call **1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)**.

<https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2022/what-is-cybertipline>

Confidential sexual-assault support

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline: **800-656-HOPE (4673)**; text **HOPE** to **64673**; chat online.

<https://rainn.org/help-and-healing/hotline/>

For use outside the United States, adult leaders must replace these routes with current local emergency, child-protection, and survivor-support resources.

PERSISTENCE IS PROTECTION

If an adult minimizes the concern, tell another

Sometimes an adult is distracted, uncomfortable, untrained, or too quick to explain something away. One poor response does not end the responsibility to seek help.

Adult says: “It's probably just teenage drama.”

You can say: “Maybe, but there is secrecy and fear, and I am still worried. Who is the person responsible for safeguarding here?”

Adult says: “Don't spread rumors.”

You can say: “I agree. I am not asking you to label anyone. I am asking you to follow the safety process.”

Adult says: “Let me handle it,” then nothing happens.

You can say: “What is the next step, and who else needs to know? I need to make sure the concern reached the right person.”

Keep the circle responsible

- ☐ Go to another trusted adult or the designated safeguarding lead.
- ☐ Use the organization's written reporting route.
- ☐ For immediate danger, contact emergency services.
- ☐ Do not investigate while you wait.
- ☐ Do not promise your friend that a particular adult will respond perfectly.

“I am not trying to get anyone in trouble. I am trying to make sure someone qualified checks the safety concern.”

COACH YOURSELF

Before you help her, check yourself

Am I trying to help - or trying to be right?

Am I listening - or waiting for my turn to talk?

Am I curious - or have I already decided what happened?

Am I protecting privacy - or turning this into gossip?

Am I becoming her only person - when she needs a bigger circle?

Is this touching something in my own life - and do I need support too?

Your boundaries matter

- ☐ You may pause a conversation to get adult help.
- ☐ You do not have to answer messages all night.
- ☐ You do not have to hold graphic details.
- ☐ You can ask a trusted adult to debrief without sharing unnecessary details.
- ☐ You can care deeply without becoming responsible for every outcome.

THE STANDARD

A good coach leaves somebody with more clarity, more choices, and more safe connection - including herself.

PRACTICE BEFORE THE MOMENT

An older boyfriend and a hidden relationship

The moment

Your friend is 16. Her new 22-year-old boyfriend picks her up after school. She says her parents “would freak out,” so the relationship has to stay secret.

Your first line

Your second question

A steady response could sound like

“I hear that you really like him. I'm not asking you to prove he's bad. I want to know whether you feel free and safe. What happens if you slow things down, tell him no, or want an adult you trust to know?”

What you are listening for

secrecy

age and power

fear

loss of freedom

Next safe step

Bring the concern to a trusted adult or safeguarding lead. Do not confront him, follow the car, or try to trap him in messages.

The test: Does what you say make it easier - or harder - for her to tell you the truth?

PRACTICE BEFORE THE MOMENT

A friend who is always texting and increasingly afraid

The moment

A girl on your team stopped hanging out with everyone. She is constantly texting one person. When her phone buzzes, she looks nervous and leaves practice early.

Your first line

Your second question

A steady response could sound like

“You've seemed tense every time your phone goes off, and we miss you around here. I could be wrong. Is somebody making it hard for you not to answer?”

What you are listening for

monitoring

isolation

immediate replies

threats

Next safe step

If she describes fear, threats, sexual pressure, or control, stay with her and add a safe adult. If she says little, leave the door open and keep normal connection alive.

Coach move: Understand the relationship behind the screen; do not demand the phone.

TWO HIGH-STAKES MOMENTS

Threatened images and a request for secrecy

3 / An image is being used as leverage

Your friend sent a sexual picture. Now someone is threatening to share it unless she sends more.

TRY

“You are not in trouble with me. Do not send anything else. We are getting an adult who knows how to help, and I will go with you.”

AVOID

“Why would you send that?” or “Send me the screenshot.” Do not request or forward the image.

Next: Bring in a safe adult immediately. Use emergency help if danger is immediate and the CyberTipline route on page 20 for suspected online child sexual exploitation.

4 / “Promise you won't tell anyone.”

A girl tells you something serious, then asks for total secrecy.

TRY

“I can keep this private from people who do not need to know. I cannot promise to keep danger secret. I can promise to stay with you while we tell someone who can help.”

AVOID

Agreeing first and breaking the promise later.

Next: Explain who you need to tell and why. Offer safe choices about which qualified adult to approach when possible.

Privacy protects dignity. Secrecy can protect danger.

GREAT COACHES KNOW WHO TO CALL

Name two safe adults before there is an emergency

A safe adult is not only kind. A safe adult listens, follows policy, respects privacy, and takes action when protection is needed.

At school or in a program

Counselor, teacher, coach, administrator, campus safety, designated safeguarding lead.

At home

Parent, caregiver, grandparent, older sibling, or trusted family friend.

In the community

Youth leader, clergy member, mentor, advocate, or qualified professional.

For urgent danger

Emergency services, law enforcement, child-protection authorities, or specialist hotlines.

My first call

Name: _____

Role: _____

How to reach them: _____

My second call

Name: _____

Role: _____

How to reach them: _____

Ask now: "If something serious happened to a friend tonight, who would I call first?"

KEEP THIS PAGE CLOSE

The 12 tripwires

One sign is not a verdict. A pattern is a reason to move closer, ask with care, and involve a safe adult.

1 Sudden change She seems less like herself.	2 Secrecy A relationship must stay hidden.
3 Isolation Friends, family, teams, or routines fall away.	4 Special attention One person makes her feel uniquely chosen.
5 Gifts and favors Help begins to feel like a debt.	6 Boundary testing Small rules and limits keep shifting.
7 Pressure after no A boundary brings guilt, anger, threats, or withdrawal.	8 Power gap Age, status, money, authority, or opportunity reduces freedom.
9 Growing dependence He becomes the answer to needs he may be deepening.	10 Fear of reactions She manages his moods and checks every word.
11 Digital control Immediate replies, passwords, location, images, or monitoring are expected.	12 Threats or leverage Fear, blackmail, exposure, or harm is used to keep control.

USE BOTH QUESTIONS

What happens when you say no? Does this person make your world bigger or smaller?

Remember: Notice before you name. Do not investigate or confront. Move toward her privately and bring in one safe adult.

THE WHOLE PLAYBOOK ON ONE PAGE

See it. Get it. Say something. Get help.

- 01** Notice the change before you name the cause.

- 02** Do not gossip. Go closer.

- 03** Ask what happens when she says no.

- 04** Do not confuse attention with respect.

- 05** Do not make belonging sound silly.

- 06** Never use shame as a teaching tool.

- 07** Ask one more good question. Then listen.

- 08** Do not promise secrecy when someone may be in danger.

- 09** Know when to bring in a safe adult.

- 10** Make the next conversation more likely.

The goal is not to create fear. It is to build recognition, confidence, and connection.

YOU ARE NOT BEING ASKED TO CARRY THE WHOLE STORY

You are being asked to notice when a story starts changing

And to make sure your friend does not have to face that change alone.

An effective coach is not the person with every answer. She is the person who can stay calm enough to hear the question underneath the silence.

She does not shame. She does not investigate. She does not promise secrecy she cannot safely keep.

She recognizes

She notices changes, patterns, pressure, secrecy, and fear.

She connects

She asks with care and listens without blame.

She refers

She brings in a safe adult and stays beside her friend.

You do not have to rescue everyone. But nobody around you should have to wonder whether anyone noticed.

The promise

"If I notice a friend becoming more secretive, isolated, pressured, or afraid, I will not jump to conclusions - and I will not look away. I will ask with care, listen without blame, and help connect her to a safe adult."

Signed: _____ Date: _____

BEFORE YOU HAND OUT THIS BOOK

Build the safety structure around the young coach

Adult preparation

- ☐ Confirm the current reporting policy and local legal duties.
- ☐ Name the safeguarding lead and backup.
- ☐ Replace or supplement U.S. resources for your location.
- ☐ Decide how disclosures during a session will be handled.
- ☐ Give young coaches a private way to ask for their own help.
- ☐ Arrange professional review before field use.

Facilitation boundaries

- ☐ Never ask participants to disclose personal experiences publicly.
- ☐ Use fictional scenarios.
- ☐ Do not role-play graphic abuse.
- ☐ Do not promise confidentiality the program cannot provide.
- ☐ Pause the activity if a safety concern emerges.
- ☐ Debrief young leaders after difficult material.
- ☐ Do not make a young person repeat her story to multiple adults or turn it into a group lesson.

A 45-minute starter session

- 5 Purpose and lane.** Coach, not detective or rescuer.
- 8 See the pattern.** Changes are clues, not conclusions.
- 8 The no test.** Practice one freedom question.
- 12 Conversation lab.** Pairs practice first line, second question, adult bridge.
- 7 Safety route.** Name the designated adults and urgent-help process.
- 5 Close and check out.** Private questions; no public disclosures.

Key adult response: “Thank you for telling me. You did the right thing. I will take responsibility for the next safety step.”

THE NEXT MANUSCRIPT

A 26-chapter path from recognition to a culture of protection

I / Become the coach

1. The moment you notice
2. Calm is a skill
3. Know your lane

II / Break the code

4. Attention or access?
5. The secrecy test
6. The isolation move
7. Boundary drift
8. Power in disguise

III / See the vulnerability window

9. A moment, not a label
10. The need beneath the hook
11. The freedom check

IV / Start the conversation

12. The first 90 seconds
13. The second question
14. Say this, not that
15. When she tells you

V / Bring in help without disappearing

16. The adult bridge
17. When the first adult fails
18. Digital danger
19. After the disclosure

VI / Practice before the moment

20. Conversation labs
21. The pressure switch
22. Coach under pressure

VII / Build coaches who build coaches

23. The circle of five
24. Lead one session
25. Protect the protectors
26. Pass it on

Repeatable chapter device: End every chapter with one Coach Card: *notice, ask, say, avoid, next safe step.*

Edition strategy: Keep one strong core playbook. Add short setting-specific leader guides for Interact/Rotary, churches, schools, and teams rather than rewriting the youth-facing book four times.

SELECTED SOURCES FOR MANUSCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

Keep the language practical and the safety guidance current

1. **RAINN, “Children & Sexual Violence: Warning Signs & Prevention.”** Grooming as a deliberate process that can build secrecy, dependence, and control; warning signs include gifts, isolation, boundary crossing, secrecy, and excessive digital communication.
<https://rainn.org/get-informed/issues/children-and-sexual-violence/>
2. **RAINN, National Sexual Assault Hotline.** Current U.S. support routes: phone, text, and chat.
<https://rainn.org/help-and-healing/hotline/>
3. **NSPCC Learning, “Grooming: recognising the signs.”** Pattern-based indicators and the caution that signs can resemble typical teenage behavior.
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/grooming>
4. **NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit, “Protecting children in sport from sexual abuse.”** Short-term vulnerability and signs in teams and activities.
<https://sport.nspcc.org.uk/resource-library/best-practice/protecting-children-in-sport-from-grooming-and-sexual-abuse/>
5. **FBI, “Protecting Kids and Teens from Grooming.”** Secrets, online warning signs, adult responsibility, and reporting suspected grooming.
<https://www.fbi.gov/news/podcasts/inside-the-fbi-podcast-protecting-kids-and-teens-from-grooming>
6. **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, “What is the CyberTipline?”** U.S. reporting for online child sexual exploitation.
<https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2022/what-is-cybertipline>

BEFORE PUBLICATION OR GROUP USE

Review with a child-safeguarding specialist, trauma-informed clinician, lawyer familiar with the intended jurisdictions, and a youth advisory circle. Confirm every phone number, link, reporting duty, and organization-specific procedure at final production.

Youth-language test: Ask young readers what they would actually say. Preserve the principle, then replace any line that sounds like an adult wrote it for them.

Working manuscript prepared for editorial development. It is not a substitute for local law, organizational safeguarding policy, emergency services, medical care, or professional counseling.