



Grooming Short Activity & Scenarios: Identifying Tactics

Grooming is any manipulative behavior that is used to prepare and coerce youth into sexual activity. Often abusers use strategies like inappropriate language or touch, alone time, favoritism, or contacting youth outside of programs to build a relationship with them. The overall objective of grooming is to lower a child's inhibitions so they become more relaxed and accepting towards physical touch.

Abusers do not just groom youth. They also groom parents/guardians, staff, and even entire communities. They create a trustworthy image and relationship with those around them so that people don't become suspicious when they behave inappropriately. By building relationships, they also gain trust which opens the door for more access to youth.

The exercise below is intended to prompt staff to think through different grooming behaviors they may see within the course of their work. Use this at your next staff meeting to help facilitate a conversation around the importance of identifying grooming behaviors.

It is important to note that these behaviors do not always mean someone is an abuser. These scenarios are being used to provide a tangible example of how someone may groom others.

Time:

15+ minutes

Materials needed:

- Printed scenarios

Instructions:

1. Break staff into four groups
2. Give each group one of the scenarios. Each scenario represents a different category an abuser is grooming.
3. Prompt each group to read their scenario and then identify/discuss the grooming tactics the abuser used
4. Once each group is done discussing, have them read the scenario to the larger group and summarize the grooming tactics they identified
5. After all four groups have shared, have them go back into their smaller groups for 5 minutes and identify other grooming tactics that an abuser may use to groom their category that was not in their scenario
6. Once the 5 minutes are up, facilitate a conversation with all staff:
 - a. What was your biggest takeaway after brainstorming different grooming tactics?
 - b. Were there any grooming tactics that you heard today that you hadn't thought of before?
 - c. What layers of protection can we put into place to make sure no grooming behaviors occur at our organization?
 - d. How can we intervene when we see grooming behaviors?
7. To conclude the activity, remind staff of your organization's reporting procedures for red-flag behaviors and suspected abuse

Scenarios:

Youth Scenario

Chris was a counselor at an overnight camp. During session two, Emily began attending camp for three weeks. She missed home, and was having a hard time making friends. To make Emily feel better, Chris told her about how he missed home back when he started college. He also started buying her snacks from the camp store and making her friendship bracelets during free time. Emily felt a lot better because she felt that she had Chris as a friend. She really trusted him.

Parents/Guardians Scenario

Caroline's parents both worked late, so she attended after-school programming every day. Timothy, the after-school counselor, began to form a close relationship with Caroline's parents. Each day, he would have Caroline make a craft to give to her parents when they picked her up. One day, when Caroline's Mom was running late for pick-up, Timothy offered to drive Caroline home. Caroline's Mom was so grateful that Timothy was willing to be helpful.

Co-Worker Scenario

Brian and John were both counselors at overnight camp. Each night the counselors had an hour of free-time once the campers went to bed. Brian never wanted to take his hour of free-time, so he would let John take 2 hours. John was very appreciative of this. A few weeks into camp, John found out that Brian was staying back every night to spend alone time with one of the campers. John never thought anything of it because Brian was always so helpful and kind.

Community Scenario

Sam was a volunteer basketball coach. Parents, volunteers, and other community members loved how invested she was in the community. Every season, Sam offered to give extra, small group lessons after practice. Sam eventually started inviting individual kids to come practice at her house. Everyone was so grateful for her extra help and support to develop their child's skills.