Child Sexual Abuse: The Grooming Process

Grooming plays a key part in sexual abuse. Grooming is a subtle, gradual, and escalating process in which the offender deceives and manipulates the victim and their family. The offender will appear to be likable and can play a positive role in the community, while building trust with the victim and family members. Grooming is a carefully thought-out and purposeful process. Offenders may start the grooming process years before any abuse actually takes place.

Over 90% of sexual offenders are individuals known and trusted by the child and family. Particularly friendly and easy-going, they place themselves into a child’s life in positions of trust through his/her family, school, sports and hobbies.

Here are some key factors of the grooming process that professionals and parents need to watch for when allowing adults into children’s life:

Vulnerability-Grooming the victim
- All children by nature are vulnerable to adults that have control and authority over them.
- The offender will pick a child whom they think no one will listen to or believe.
- A child with a disability/special needs

Accessibility-Grooming the environment
- The offender works to create opportunities to be alone with the child.
  - Coaching/Tutoring
  - Needing help with special projects
  - Special trips
  - Offering rides home

Opportunity-Grooming the people close to the child
- The offender will need to have earned the trust of everyone. They know what to do to gain that trust. They will most likely be known as a “great person.”
  - “He’s great with the kids.”
  - “She will do anything for them.”
  - “The kids all love him.”
  - “She is so helpful to everyone.”
  - “He would never do something like that”

Always Remember...
Nobody should want to spend more time with your child than you
&
Interactions should be observable and/or interruptible