

Sexual Grooming Behaviors

Georgia M. Winters, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor | Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, NJ

Email: gwinters@fdu.edu



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The goals of grooming are to: (Lanning & Dietz, 2014)

- 1) Gain initial “cooperation”
- 2) Decrease the likelihood of disclosure or detection
- 3) Increase the likelihood of future sexual contact

Prevalence:

- 30-45% of adults with child sexual abuse (CSA) offenses used sexual grooming (Canter et al., 1998; Groth & Birnbaum, 1978)
- 99% of adult victims of CSA reported experiencing at least one sexual grooming behaviors (Winters & Jeglic, 2022)

Online and in-person

Definition

Sexual grooming is the deceptive process used by sexual abusers to facilitate sexual contact with a minor while simultaneously avoiding detection. Prior to the commission of the sexual abuse, the would-be sexual abuser may select a victim, gain access to and isolate the minor, develop trust with the minor and often their guardians, community, and youth-serving institutions, and desensitize the minor to sexual content and physical contact. Post-abuse, the offender may use maintenance strategies on the victim to facilitate future sexual abuse and/or to prevent disclosure.” (Winters et al., 2021)

Complexities of Sexual Grooming

The types of behaviors and length of time depends on:

- Context
- Characteristics of the victim
- Characteristics of the perpetrator

Normal adult/child interaction

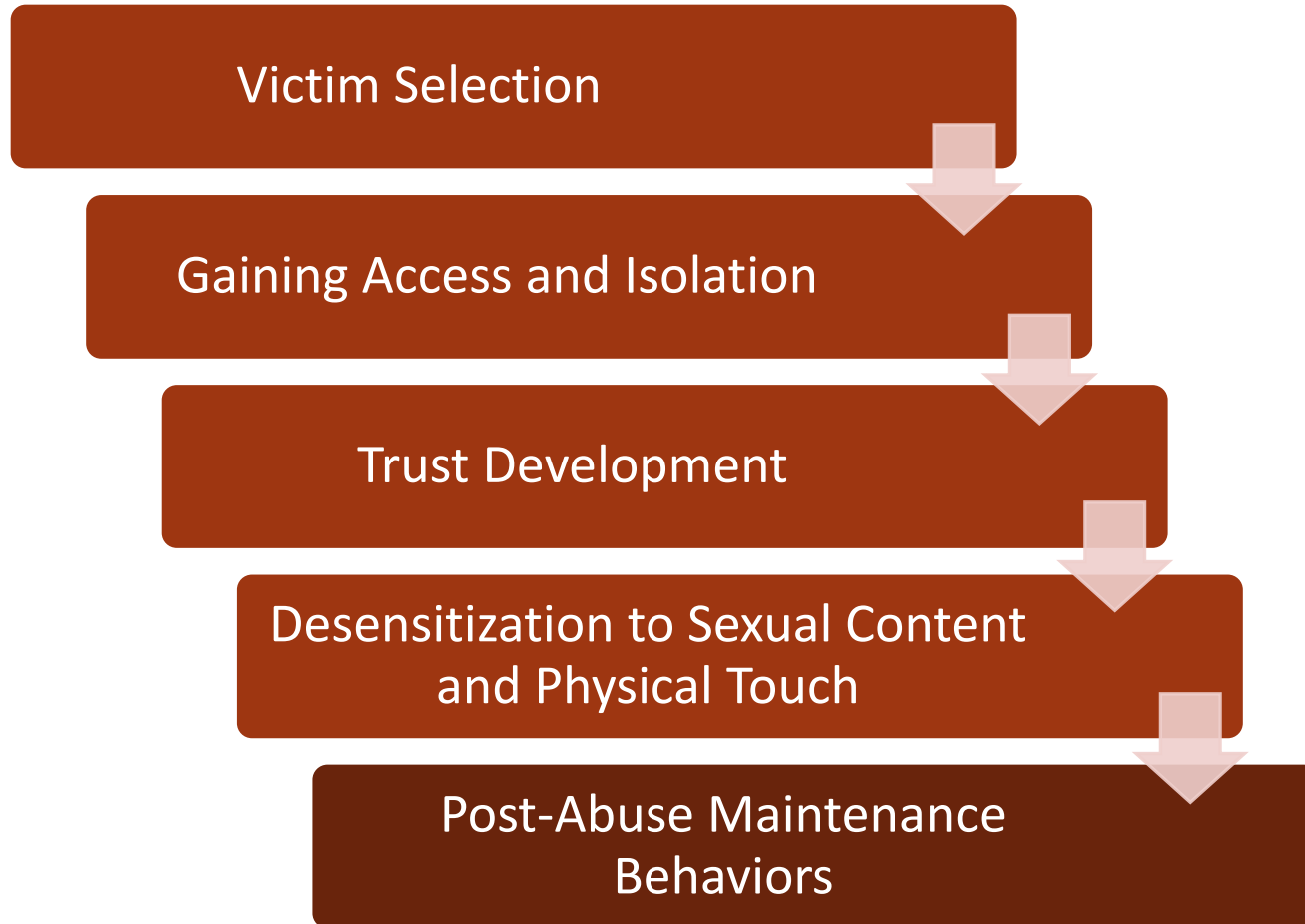
Individuals have difficulties recognizing sexual grooming behaviors (Winters & Jeglic, 2017)

Hindsight bias (Winters & Jeglic, 2016)



Sexual Grooming Model (SGM)

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(Winters et al., 2020)

Content Validation

18 experts provided feedback on the SGM

Content Validity Index analyses showed all five stages of the SGM were deemed relevant

- 42 specific grooming behaviors under these stages

Victim Selection

Victim Selection

Emotional/Psychological Characteristics

	Compliant/trusting of adults
	Lack confidence/low self-esteem
	Lonely/isolated
	Troubled
	Needy
	Unwanted/unloved/neglected

Family Situation

	Not close to parents/parents are not resources for them
	Single mothers/need of "father figure"
	Lack of supervision

Gaining Access and Isolation

Gaining Access and Isolation	
	Involvement in youth-serving organizations
	Manipulate family to gain access to child
	Activities alone with children/excludes adults
	Overnight stays/outings
	Separate child from peers and family

Trust Development

Trust Development

Presents as Likable

Charming/nice/likable

Insider status/good reputation/"pillars of the community"

Attention/Affection

Affectionate/loving

Giving them attention

Favoritism/"special relationship"

Compliments

Spending time with child/communicating often

Activities and Rewards

Engage in childlike activities (e.g., stories, games, sports, music)

Rewards/privileges (e.g., gifts, toys, treats, money, trips)

Provided drugs and/or alcohol

Desensitization to Sexual Content and Physical Contact

Desensitization to Sexual Content and Physical Contact

Sexual Conversations

- | | |
|--|--|
| | Ask questions about child's sexual experience/relationships |
| | Talk about sexual things they themselves had done |
| | Inappropriate sexual language/dirty jokes |
| | Teach child sexual education (e.g., touch body, sex as a game) |

Sexual Behaviors

- | | |
|--|---|
| | Watch the child undressing |
| | Exposing naked body |
| | Show child pornography magazines/videos |
| | Use of accidental touching/distraction while touching |
| | Seemingly innocent/non-sexual contact |
| | Desensitize to touch/increasing sexual touching |

Post-Abuse Maintenance

Post-Abuse Maintenance Behaviors

	Told not to tell anyone what happened
	Encouraging secrets
	I love you/you're special
	Rewards/bribes/avoid punishment
	Persuaded the child it was acceptable/normal behavior
	Misstated moral standards regarding touch
	Victim made to feel responsible
	Threats of abandonment/rejection/family breaking up



Sexual Grooming Scale – Victim Version

Sexual Grooming Scale – Victim Version (SGS-V)

- Self-report measure for adult victims of CSA
- SGS-V was pilot tested with 115 adult victims of CSA

SGM Stage	Number of SGS-V Items	Range of Observed Scores	Mean Score	Endorsed at Least 1 Item (%)
Victim Selection	9	0-9	3.2	91
Gaining Access and Isolation	5	0-4	1.1	65
Trust Development	10	0-9	4.3	94
Desensitization	10	0-10	4.1	93
Post-Abuse Maintenance	8	0-8	2.8	83
Total	42	0-37	15.3	99.1

Helpful References

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