

## The Grooming Process: (Steps the abuser takes to set up children)

Some parents wonder how it is possible for their children to be abused. Offenders use many tactics to gain access to children. These include:

1. Seeking out an approachable child: Abusers usually pick children who are easy to get to (relatives, friends, and neighbors). They may also seek children who have emotional needs for friendship and attention.
2. Establishing trust with the child: Abusers often seek ways to build trust and friendship with children. They may spend time playing with them, volunteer to baby-sit, become their "buddy" or buy them candy or presents.
3. Breaking down the child's resistance to touch: Abusers may find ways to touch children a lot. As a result, the children are often confused when the touch becomes sexual. The abusers may play games with a lot of physical contact, like wrestling, and they may tickle children and sneak sexual touches.
4. Finding ways to isolate a child: Abusers find excuses to be alone with children so they can molest them. For example, they may baby-sit, invite them to sleep over, or take them camping.
5. Blaming the child and keeping the secret: Abusers try to make the children feel responsible so they won't tell. They use statements like these:
  - "You know you like the way I touch you."
  - "If you tell, people will think you are bad."
  - "If you tell our 'special secret', I will go to jail."
  - "If you tell your mother, she won't love you anymore."