



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Understanding children's perspective of online grooming

It is important to remember that children and young people who experience grooming are being manipulated by predators. They may not understand that they are being groomed and can be resistant to help and support.

They don't believe me

Groomers may paint themselves as a friend, a romantic relationship, a mentor or supporter. They seek to create loyalty and dependence in children. This may be through attention, affection and gifts, which make children feel special. When adults intervene, children may express disbelief and positive regard for groomers.

It is also possible that children have been intimidated, shamed and/or blackmailed, creating fear which leads them to defend groomers in order to protect themselves.

They won't talk to me

In the process of grooming, predators often discredit or slander children's family and friends (e.g 'your parents don't understand you like I do') to isolate them from their protective network.

Children are often told to keep their interactions with the groomer a secret. They may also experience romantic feelings which they feel embarrassed to talk about or assume that their family/friends will not understand.

What can I do?

- When concerned that your child is being groomed, it is normal to feel anxious, scared and/or angry. Let children know that they are not to blame so that they do not feel like the cause of these emotions.
- Understand that children may not react the same way as you. Remember that children are being psychologically manipulated and may be resistant to help.
- Give children time to process what you are saying and allow them to express the way that they feel. Listen to what they have to say.
- Refrain from judging or punishing children for their interactions with the groomer, remembering that they have been exposed to influences which discredit parental authority and normalise inappropriate behaviours and abuse. Let children know that this is not their fault.
- Express unconditional positive regard for children to prevent feelings of shame.
- Let children know that they have done the right thing by telling you. Encourage open conversation.
- Persist in offering support. It can take time to disentangle the lies and dependence created by people who groom children.