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**Australia's leading
child protection
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BRAVE HEARTS



“Protecting children against sexual assault”

Grooming Behaviours

Building the child's trust

Using presents, special attention, treats, spending time together and playing games with non-sexual physical contact.

Favouritism

Treated differently and made a unique friend. The offender treats the child as an adult.

Gaining the trust of the child's carer/s

Careful to be 'seen' as a close, caring and reliable relative or friend of the family

Isolation (from family, friends)

To ensure secrecy and lessen chances of disclosure or belief

Intimidation and secrecy

The offender begins to use coercion eg. threatening looks and body language, glares, stalking and rules of secrecy, or presenting a distorted view of what is happening.

‘Testing the waters’ or boundary violation

“Innocent” touching, gradually developing into ‘accidental’ contact of sexual organs.

Why some children don't disclose

Shaping the child's perceptions

The child is often confused as to what is acceptable and can take on self-blame for the situation, as his/her viewpoint can become totally distorted.

It is so hard for anyone to disclose sexual assault. For children who do not have the language or the understanding of what has happened, it can be even more difficult. Some of the reasons children don't tell are:

- ☞ They often feel it is their fault because they let it happen.
- ☞ They feel guilty about their body's natural reaction to sexual activity (even though this is beyond their control).
- ☞ They feel disclosure may cause family problems or breakdowns.
- ☞ The offender may be someone the child/young person heavily relies on.
- ☞ They fear they will be blamed, punished or not believed.
- ☞ They fear they will be taken away from their homes and their families if they speak out.
- ☞ They fear disclosure will cause harm to someone or something they love and care for, such as family members or pets.

Common Indicators in Offenders

- Paying particular interest to a child
- Isolating a child from other children
- Taking a child away from public gaze
- Engaging in inappropriate close physical contact with a child
- More interested in children than adults
- Suspicious behaviour in relation to children
(watching/following/photos/gifts)