

Things You Need to Know About Child Molesters

By Bracha Goetz

What is the profile of a child molester? An average child molester will offend 200–400 times before being caught, if ever. The vast majority of offenders do not get caught, and they have no criminal records. According to the FBI, only one out of ten cases of child sexual abuse is reported to law enforcement.

Many of the statistics on these types of crimes are gleaned from incarcerated perpetrators, who have provided civil authorities with an inside view into the lives of child molesters. This information has helped law enforcement authorities ascertain that only the tip of the iceberg is being disclosed and reported.

Child molesters usually begin their pattern of behavior while still teens. If they are apprehended at a young age, intense rehabilitation has been found to have success. The vast majority of child molesters are male, and most sexual abusers were sexually abused as children.

Rather than appearing to be “monsters,” perpetrators usually try to be very charming and friendly. After gaining widespread trust, over time, some eventually even head nonprofit organizations of various kinds dealing with youth, giving the molesters not only easy access but also free rein.



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Child molesters tend to rationalize their sexual interests and validate their behavior. They tend to show an excessive interest in children, and often seduce children with attention, affection and gifts. They lie and manipulate, typically very skillfully.

It is normal for children to learn early on that their survival depends on adults. Besides fulfilling the emotional and physical needs of children, adults are bigger and stronger. Children are instructed to respect and obey adults, but the exceptions to this need to be clearly taught as well.

Teen/adult child molesters exploit their size and status to influence and control a child's behavior, enticing the child into sexual activity. Clever and experienced child molesters lower a child's inhibitions by gradually seducing them, easily exploiting a child's natural curiosity and the lack of prevention education that a particular child may have.

Even children who are getting attention and affection at home still appreciate it from others in their lives. It is important to realize that *all* children, even those from "normal" homes, are at risk from a molester's seduction techniques, if they have not been trained how to deal with them. Although all children are at risk, child molesters particularly seek out shy and naive children; children with disabilities; and children who are experiencing loneliness, emotional neglect or strong feelings of alienation. Children who are not educated about child molesters are the most vulnerable of all.

In addition, since large numbers of children are now being raised in single-parent families, this is seen as advantageous by child molesters. Many working parents are overly desperate for readily available babysitters and those offering extra free attention to their children. Pedophiles master manipulative skills and use them most effectively on troubled children by first building up the child's self-esteem, appealing to their need to be heard, understood and valued.

Showering their prospective victims with attention, offenders may also offer treats, trips to desirable places

**Children who are not
educated about child**

that children enjoy, or special privileges. Once a child has accepted many “kind” offers from the molester, it becomes increasingly more difficult for the child to

assert him- or herself and refuse the molester’s advances, which tend to get more confusing very gradually.

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Once child molesters have chosen their potential victims, they work hard at patiently developing relationships with them. Since this grooming process can sometimes go on for years, it is common for child molesters to cultivate many prospective victims at a time. A large number of predators believe that what they are doing is not wrong, and that being intimate with a child is actually “healthy” for the child. After extended molestation, children and preteens can actually grow attached to their offender and become jealous when the offender’s attention goes to others who are younger, once they have reached a certain age. Their entire lives have been colored by the abuse.

Much information about how molesters operate has been gained by interviewing incarcerated offenders. The perpetrators invariably explain how they identify their potential victims by assessing their vulnerability as well as the opportunity to offend. The gullibility and naivete of the children are main factors considered by offenders when selecting their victims. They choose those whom they ascertain can be manipulated into a vulnerable situation, and then the children’s vulnerability is further exploited.

It is extremely hard to stand up to a molester if a child has not been proactively prepared beforehand to do so. Offenders often progressively test their victims to see their reactions, by getting physically too close for comfort with them, by making somewhat suggestive comments or “off-color” jokes, or by roughhousing with them. They make deliberately confusing statements like, “Sometimes friends/family will help each other and touch each other.” Predators commonly first begin to touch private parts of the victim’s body by brushing up against them “accidentally on purpose.” If confronted, the perpetrators have a ready excuse like “I was just kidding” or “it was an accident.” When

the victim does not stop the predator's incremental advances, this is viewed by the offender as a signal to progress further.

An offender may put added pressure on the victim if he senses that there is still potential to molest, by saying something like "You're hurting my feelings by saying no." When children are molested, they are left enormously guilt-ridden. Even though what happened to them was not their fault, they still feel like it was.

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Children are also left deeply confused, as they may often feel like they cooperated if they enjoyed both the attention as well as the physical sensations that come with the molestation. This is one major reason why it is difficult for children to disclose that they were preyed upon, as they may not even understand what they experienced until many years later. They are usually left feeling "dirty" and intensely ashamed, largely blaming themselves for the most intimate type of predation that they were lured, tricked, and sometimes threatened into enduring.

Once a child has become a victim of a particular predator, the re-victimization can often take on a repetitive and ritualistic nature. When the molestation continues over long periods of time, the child may often cope by essentially separating the offender into two different people when dealing with his or her "uncle & monster," "older brother & rapist" or "youth group leader & predator," for example, while watching his or her perpetrator parade around, respected and above reproach.

If predators are ever caught by adults unfamiliar with how offenders operate, the molesters typically and quickly claim either that the child was the seducer, or that it was the first time that they ever did anything like that, and provide some "plausible" excuse for why it happened just that one time. It is standard practice for offenders to express great remorse, insisting in a very convincing way that they feel terrible about what they did, and of course, they promise that they "will never do it again."

As people who genuinely want to make this world a better place, we try very hard to give people the benefit of the doubt. We strive to not speak badly about people. And we believe that people can repent for their wrong deeds. Pedophiles know this, and they take advantage of our sincere efforts.

This is why it is important for us to learn and to teach others about the things you never wanted to know about child molesters.

Pointers for Parents:

- Calmly and clearly, teach your children about personal safety, in age-appropriate ways, from age three and up, each year adding on more age-appropriate details. Role-playing different scenarios is a very effective proactive tool. Try to prevent your children from learning about this in a much harder way.
- Be wary, and openly communicate through calm and concerned questions, with a child if he or she appears to be uncharacteristically uncomfortable or expresses negativity around a particular adult male or teen—even if the person is a neighbor, close friend of the family, relative, or respected community member.
- Be wary, and openly communicate through calm and concerned questions, with a child who is receiving special favors or gifts from an adult male or teen.
- Be wary, and openly communicate through calm and concerned questions with a child, if anybody—including teachers, coaches, counselors, youth group leaders, doctors or babysitters, as well as relatives, ever meets privately in a room with a closed door with a child for any reason, or goes off with them to any place where they are alone.
- If a child discloses that he or she has been sexually abused, never blame the child for any of their actions or for not telling you sooner. Victims of abuse require support.

Calmly and clearly, teach your children about personal safety, in age-appropriate ways

- If a child discloses that he or she has been sexually abused, don't rely on anyone else to fulfill your obligation. Call 911.
- Remember that perpetrators can look you right in the eye and lie easily. They are masters of deception. Leave investigations for forensic experts.

Sources:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, professional training materials

One Sex Offender's Strategy

Editor's Note: *The Crown Heights Rabbinical Board has ruled that in any case of suspected child abuse, one must go immediately to the police and not attempt to deal with it internally.*

By Bracha Goetz



Bracha Goetz is the Harvard-educated author of 36 books to help children's souls shine, and the new and candid memoir, *Searching for G-d in the Garbage*.

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