

Connecting The Dots Of HUMAN TRAFFICKING

From Foster Care

with
Rhonda Sciortino & Sandie Morgan

**In This
Edition:**

Inoculate Kids Against Traffickers



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Did you know that you can inoculate your kids against the lure of traffickers, against self-medicating, and against myriad other risky behaviors?

Young people in communities throughout the US are drawn into trafficking, drugs, and other risky behavior for many different reasons, including the practical issues of needing a place to stay and needing to earn money, but one of the most powerful "pull factors" is the primal need to be loved, valued, and to belong.

As demented as it may sound to us, many young trafficking victims willingly sell themselves to help support the household of their "boyfriend," who is actually their trafficker. They want to "do their fair share" to pay their way. Being raped for money multiple times a day, every day is painful—physically and emotionally. Enter the drugs. The trafficker "takes care of them" by giving them the drugs that make them feel better. Isn't that thoughtful?

Young people who feel that they belong to the "family" of the trafficker don't try to run away. They don't want to leave. They often go back to the trafficker even after they're rescued. Why? The feeling of belonging is a powerful magnet.

So what can be done? How can you change the kids you care about from the inside so that they value themselves and have the dignity and self-respect to take care of themselves, to not sell themselves or give themselves away in promiscuity, or to damage or even destroy themselves with drugs? The answer is in the inoculation.

The best inoculation against risky behavior and poor decisions is in filling the young people within your influence with love, value, and a strong sense of belonging.

To inoculate young people, create a three part plan to give them the love, value and belonging they need to defend against all the dangers they face. The first of the three part plan is to use all five love languages to clearly communicate to them that they are loved.

The five love languages (a term coined and written extensively on by Dr. Gary Chapman) are words of affirmation, acts of service, quality time, appropriate physical touch, and gift giving. Since we may not know the dominant love languages of young people, it's important that we put all five into action.



Give them words of encouragement that they are awesome and their future is bright. Do something for them. Just a simple act of leaving a piece of candy on their pillow or hiding a sweet note in their jacket pocket shows love. Sitting with the young person, making eye contact, and asking an open-ended question, and really listening (without interruption) to the answer will do wonders in making the young person feel valued and better understood. A gentle hand on a shoulder as they leave for school or holding pinkie fingers while watching a TV show of their choice can make them feel valued and connected. And lastly, gift giving doesn't have to be expensive, in fact, some of the best gifts are in giving them something you make for them or passing down something that has a sentimental value to you. Entrusting the young person with an heirloom can go a long way toward making the young person feel like a valued part of the family.

A strong sense of belonging can be accomplished with little things like whole-family pictures, matching t-shirts, pajamas, or socks for every member of the family. Another thing that can help solidify belonging is establishing traditions and including the kid as a main player in the tradition. For example, you can decide that every Tuesday is going to be "Taco Tuesday." Give the young person the responsibility of cooking the meat for the tacos or warming the tortillas or making homemade salsa. Whatever it is, make the kid feel important and valued. Compliment whatever he or she has done, and set aside that dinner hour as a time when everyone sits down to eat together with no phones or TV. You can alternate which member of the family chooses the music. Have fun with it, groaning with the music the kids choose, and letting the kids groan over the music the adults choose. You get the idea.

A quick note to those who would deny the kid the opportunity to participate because of bad behavior: never, ever deny the young person the opportunity to participate with family. To do so, is to invite the kid to seek comfort from a bad influence.

The family of a young person who is in the life of trafficking, would give any amount of money to rescue their child. But this inoculation of giving all five love languages, making eye contact, listening, and making kids feel valued and loved and as a precious part of your family costs nothing but can generate priceless results.