

Coercive Control Involved in Human Trafficking

The trust that is essential to relationships can also be misused by those preying on emotional vulnerability. Human traffickers use luring and coercive control techniques. These relational predators start the luring process with love bombing and then move intermittently into other control techniques such as; physical and emotional isolation, financial abuse, denial of their target's perception of reality also called gas lighting, threatening bodily harm, threatening to reveal personal information, and verbal abuse. These coercive control behaviours are also evident in a broader range of unhealthy relationships, which have the potential to devolve into domestic violence.

Empowering teens with a comprehensive knowledge of the techniques of the predators' techniques of luring and coercive control equips youth with the ability to make informed choices. Coercive control is discussed in *The Domestic Abuse Bill England and Wales* passed in the summer of 2020. Of particular interest is the description of coercive control in the boxed section titled *Types of Behaviours*. <https://www.coercive-control.com/laws.html> These behaviours are synonymous with the behaviours discussed in human trafficking textbooks such as *Pimpology: The 48 Laws of the Game* by Ken Ivy, which outlines parallel techniques and sequential steps used to lure persons into the trade. Coercive control in the Canadian context is discussed in a Federal research paper entitled *Understanding coercive control in the context of intimate partner violence in Canada: How to address the issue through the criminal justice system?* <https://www.victimsfirst.gc.ca/res/cor/UCC-CCC/index.html#TOC-1-1>

Youth are the target of these tactics. The proliferation of social media makes it difficult to protect them. We can, however, equip all teens with the knowledge of the tactics that are being used against them. Educating all youth with an awareness of predators' tactics, will give them the knowledge and vocabulary that will allow them to not only identify predatory behaviour, but to express their fears to peers and caring adults, who in turn can give them support. All youth are vulnerable; regardless of where they live, what school they go to or who their parents are. <https://www.flare.com/news/reality-of-human-trafficking/> Educating our youth about the tactics used by both human traffickers and those exercising coercive control is simply the most effective way to stem the tide of human trafficking and domestic violence.

A teachable, rounded, balanced approach to instruction about the red flags of luring and coercive control found in all unhealthy relationships would undermine the strategies used by human traffickers as well as perpetrators of domestic violence. Excellent materials promoting preventative awareness, covering the tactics of luring and coercive control used in human trafficking and potential perpetrators of domestic violence have been developed by the Canadian Women's Foundation and the Joy Smith Foundation.

It is only with a collective awareness of unhealthy, manipulative, relational tactics that self-triage, peer-triage, and caring adult-triage will be possible. This in turn will open the door to inter-generational dialogue and supports being availed. Knowledge of the early signs of luring and coercive control will enable symptoms to be detected, discussed and acted upon before serious personal and relational damage occurs.

Awareness need not jeopardize the trust that is needed for connectivity. Conversely, the ability to discern the red flags of luring and coercive control will only enhance, enrich, and ensure genuine trust. Without a pre-awareness youth are left unnecessarily vulnerable to tactics that lead to financial, physical, emotional damage. Then the unheeded red flags of luring and coercive control, become the persistent alarm bells of human trafficking and domestic violence that signal the pressing need for imminent escape.

We need to be more proactive, not just reactive.