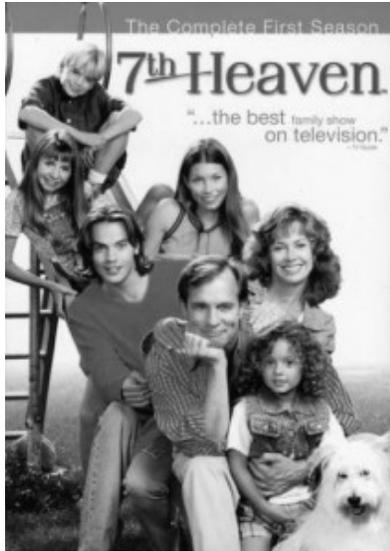


GROOMING BEHAVIORS OF CHILD PREDATORS

by Kimberly Rae



The news about Stephen Collins, beloved dad and pastor on the hit show 7th Heaven, being a child molester is surprising, and for some, devastating. The longer I study about human exploitation and the patterns of predators, though news like this is terrible and I hate it, it no longer shocks me.

Statistics say that 1 out of ever 4 women and 1 out of ever 6 men have some kind of sexual abuse in their past. That adds up to a lot of victims, which means a lot of predators.

How in the world are we to protect our children if predators can look as nice and act as nice as Stephen Collins?

There is a process predators go through with potential victims, called grooming, that every parent should know about. Though we cannot recognize predators by their hair or height or skin color or sometimes even their actions around adults, there are certain recognizable behaviors in the grooming process that can help us recognize a predator.

The following can be found with more resources at:

www.childluresprevention.com.

GROOMING BEHAVIORS:

- Befriending the child and their family to slowly gain trust.
- Giving gifts, money, trips, and/or performing special favors for child.
- Offering to babysit, including sleepovers and overnight trips.
- Encouraging harmless secrets, laying the foundation for future sexual secrets.
- Taking pictures/video of the child.
- Saying the relationship with the boy or girl is special.
- Communicating with the child excessively; texting, emailing or calling.
- Inappropriate language and/or telling dirty jokes.
- Playing body contact games with children; tickling, backrubs or wrestling.
- Making alcohol/drugs available to the youth.
- Introducing pornography to initiate sexual interest or normalize the behavior.
- Desensitizing the child through nonsexual touching, "accidental" touching of privates and/or walking in on bathroom or dressing time.

I hate that list above; I hate thinking of any adult prepping a child for abuse. But just like my work with human trafficking, if I don't know what's happening, I can't do anything about it.

Parents need to be aware of grooming techniques and be wary of anyone who exhibits them. Though you probably shouldn't read out that list to your children, you can talk with them about what behavior is appropriate and what is inappropriate (according to their different ages of course), and especially what to do if someone behaves in an inappropriate manner.

Children naturally trust adults, and in a situation where a trusted adult (like Stephen Collins), particularly a family member or adult the parents admire, a child often allows abuse because they do not know what to do and do not want to cause trouble. Here are a few things to tell your child:

1. If somebody does something bad to you, tell us. We will believe you. (But please only say this if you will. It's very important that your children can trust you. Obviously, it is also important to raise your children to be truthful, so you can believe them when it matters most.)
2. If somebody does something bad to you, that is not your fault. Tell somebody right away.
3. If somebody starts to touch you in a private place, look them in the eye, put your hands out and say very loudly, "Stop that right now!" (Might help to have them practice saying that to get used to the idea.)
4. If any adult tries to do something bad to you, get away from them if you can and ask for help from the nearest adult. Call us if you can, and if you can't, call 911. (Child molestation is a crime and should be treated as such.)

One last note. If your child ever comes to you with a story of abuse, please believe them, take what they say seriously, and do something about it. So much of abuse is silenced by parents who don't know what to do or are afraid to do the right thing. (If something happened to your child long ago, and you never dealt with it, please apologize to that child for not standing up for them, and deal with it now.)

God help us to protect our children. Hopefully, if we learn awareness and prevention, that statistic about adults who were abused as children can be less for this next generation.

www.kimberlyrae.com