

Stopping Sex Offenders in Their Tracks

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If protecting children from being sexually abused were easy, the problem would not persist. The reason so many children [continue](#) to be molested, anywhere from 25% to 33% of the population, is because society remains completely baffled by the topic; Any evidence of sexual abuse is seemingly invisible; The few clues seem too incredible to believe; and doing anything about it is always too difficult, making it easier to do nothing, blame the victims, and maintain the status quo. Doing nothing, however, continues to put more children at risk and unnecessarily costs society not only in terms of emotional damage, but also from multiple other consequences of abuse that impact society. This includes increased [employment](#) problems, greater reliance on mental health services, more health problems, and the unintended perpetuation of the cycle of abuse, thereby potentially creating ever increasing numbers of victims.

Ending child sexual abuse requires using primary prevention methods, rather than the current practices of focusing on treating victims after they have been abused, or putting the onus of responsibility on children to protect themselves from being abused by telling them to say “No” to offenders, an approach that also entirely ignores doing anything to stop child molesters. The wide spread occurrence of child sexual abuse would suggest the need for a public health approach to stemming an epidemic.

A public health approach relies on primary prevention, which places the responsibility of protecting children on the adult community by teaching adults not to continue giving molesters access to children. To successfully stop sex offenders in their tracks would involve educating the public to:

1. Be willing to consider the possibility that known and trusted adults sexually molest children
2. Be able to identify the behavior patterns used by socially skilled sex molesters
3. Be increasingly competent at recognizing potentially abusive behavior
4. Be inoculated from the spell offenders use to access children

1. Be willing to consider the possibility that known and trusted adults sexually molest children: The current problem with child sexual abuse parallels how other seemingly “invisible” public health issues were handled in the past. For instance, the first doctor to suggest using primary prevention strategies against germs by washing hands was run out of the profession. Germs were invisible, thereby making talk about them seem like hocus pocus. Stopping sex offenders from abusing children remains as elusive today as recognizing

the existence of germs appeared to be before the discovery of the microscope. Once visible, the problem becomes credible and the solutions more apparent and doable.

The same approach is needed in primary prevention of child sexual abuse that was used in combating germs by not giving germs the opportunity to infect and grow. This means, just as it was necessary to be willing to consider that seemingly invisible germs were spreading disease, it is necessary to be willing to [accept](#) that sex offenders are known, liked, and/or respected individuals. Adults unable to consider such possibilities inadvertently continue to invite molesters into their homes, schools, churches, and other organizations, their nescience ensuring that sex offenders are protected at the expense of children who are harmed. Too often, when adults remain stuck at this level of ignorance, pedophiles remain safely entrenched in the church, the school, the [home](#), or any other organization where they can continue to molest with impunity.

2. Be able to identify the behavior patterns used by the socially skilled sex molesters: The next step in primary prevention necessitates improved tools for seeing the problem. The concept of germs became credible only after the invention of the microscope, resulting in sanitation practices that eradicated many diseases. Being able to identify sex offenders would be the social equivalent of having a tool like the microscope, thereby making the seemingly invisible grooming practices of the child molester visible.

No clear microscope exists as yet for detecting sex offenders. However, because child molesters are so predictable and their behaviors follow clichéd rules, a preliminary microscope like tool can help adults develop vision. The book Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of the Offenders was written for that purpose, and sex offenders in treatment groups have confirmed that the book's information correctly outlines their preferred practices, qualifying the book for a "Sex Offender Seal of Approval" should that exist. Learning about the practices of sex offenders provides awareness essential to intervening and correctly seeing the "smarmy" behavior rather than mistaking it as "charming" conduct.

Sex offenders tend to be unbelievably helpful, with their efforts aimed at obtaining access to families and/or communities. They blur boundaries. They engage in tickling and roughhousing games with children as a screening strategy. Those adults who do not object are viewed by sex offenders as being more likely to provide safe haven for further unimpeded access to children. Adults who do nothing about such activities also inadvertently communicate to children they know about the abuse because the viewed conduct was tolerated. The socially skilled sex offenders successfully turn over zealous involvement with children into

an asset rather than the liability that would be more accurate. They reframe conduct so adults often boast they are “just like a kid” as if that were an asset rather than a liability. Most of all, these molesters do not respect boundaries, become aggressive when challenged, but tend to disappear where boundary violations are not tolerated, as such environments are not safe.

3. Be increasingly competent at recognizing potentially abusive behavior: With the knowledge to better identify child molesters, of course, comes responsibility: The responsibility of keeping such individuals from having access to children. The socially skilled child molesters, namely the groomers who first ingratiate themselves with the adults in [order](#) to access children use tried and true methods to seem above reproach. Usually they seem “too good to be true,” and as consumer advocates say, “if something seems too good to be true, it isn’t.” In this case, of course, the hidden agenda is free access to children.

Adults can intervene if they know how sex offenders operate. They do this by reading about the methods typically used by sex offenders, by being assertive when the information does not “add up,” by not tolerating “stories,” and by not being intimidated into compromising a child’s safety.

Socially skilled child molesters leave a trail of evidence, or namely people who have dealt with them in the past, know them, and choose to keep their children away because of concerns, a process explained in detail in [The Socially Skilled Child Molester: Differentiating the Guilty from the Falsely Accused](#). This slime trail, which should be readily visible, remains “secret” only because each concern, each worry, each accusation, and each situation is handled in isolation, leaving the next potential victim and their supporters unable to benefit from the rich mine of information that really could be available. Silence protects the child molester.

4. Be inoculated against the spell offenders use to access children: Inoculating communities from having their children abused would prevent harm just as washing hands stopped the spread of disease. Child sexual abuse is a virus that flourishes in secrecy and isolation. The best antidote is open communication. To protect children, the adults who experience concerns and who have doubts must do something. What can be done will need to continue to be expanded on, with endless opportunities for new information, ideas, and successes that can be beneficial to all. But to begin with this includes talking to friends and family, talking to therapists, talking to sexual assault experts, and talking to the authorities. Talking about concerns breaks the cycle of secrecy and isolation, with adults working together to manage the issues and to thereby clearly convey the message that child sexual abuse will not be kept secret and will not be tolerated. By openly talking about it, by clearly setting boundaries, and when in doubt

by removing access to children, the eradication of child sexual abuse can truly begin. Remember, child sexual abuse flourishes in secrecy and isolation. The antidote is open communication.

Standing Firm: Setting clear boundaries and saying “NO” to those whose interactions and/or interests in children seem too worrisome, or appears to parallel the practices endorsed by known sex offenders, is never wrong. This also sets a better example to children when teaching them to say no and tell by modeling such behavior and by setting and maintaining clear boundaries. People who are involved with children for all the right reasons would support such boundary setting, and abide by the rules. Those whose behavior may be suspect would find this intolerable. They would not want to waste their precious “grooming” time where they cannot gain unimpeded access to children, and therefore will instead move on to places where access is easier. By their very actions and responses, those whose involvement with children was for all the wrong reasons will become clearer as they will tend to disappear.

Just as there is no shame in being exposed to germs, there is no shame in having sex offenders circle around children opportunistically hoping to gain access / entry anywhere adults fail to intervene. The embarrassment and shame should be squarely placed on those who molest. Being vigilantly aware and openly able to discuss the topic, like washing hands, benefits all but the intrusive invaders whose conduct should not be tolerated. It is time adults learn to say “NO,” and to tell and to place the shame and blame squarely where it belongs, on those who molest.