

Inside the Mind of a Victim

Rebecca Bender

How can one tell if their daughter, student or friend is dating a pimp? If you can circle three or more things on this list, then that is a Red Flag!

Identifying Pimps:

- Fancy car
- Fancy clothes
- Flashy jewelry
- Frequently spends nights away or out of town.
- Acting out the hip-hop culture.
- Charming, attractive, clean, smooth talking.
- No actual job that one could visit: for example, starting his own record label, owning a magazine, owning bill boards in big cities or even a franchise owner of something, but sits at home.
- Big dreams and encouraging HER to become part of HIS dreams
- Her goals for life WILL be put on hold for his.
- Pulls her into the dream; everything becomes “we” so she starts to own the dream of making it big with him. When a person internalizes a dream, they will work harder to achieve it, good or bad.
- Secludes her from family and friends – wants to move away; and then picks a fight the night before she plans to visit home. This creates a “choose them or me” mentality. The pimp could also physically assault her prior to a visit home so she is too embarrassed to actually follow through with the visit.
- Any attempt to fast track the relationship is actually an attempt to control it.

Identifying Victims:

- Tired during the day from working all night.
- Suddenly she has expensive things: Gucci purse, diamond bracelet, expensive watches and clothes.
- Increasingly interested or talks a lot about dreams “we’re going to...”
- Starts to become secluded: you see her less and less.
- Frequently cancels planned trips home to visit days before arriving.

Healthy relationships should expand the circle of people you are around: not separate.

THE GRADUAL BREAK: 40 reasons she won't leave

The tactics listed below are from the mouths of abusers themselves.

I would isolate her, breaking her ties with any support she had:

- I convinced her family and friends that I was the good one.
- I took all of the money so that she depended on me for everything.
- I would start a fight before she visited with friends and family so that eventually, she just stopped. She felt too guilty about leaving me during an argument.
- I moved her way out in the country or to another city. When I left, I took her car battery with me.
- I convinced the people around her that that she was crazy, imagined things, and needed counseling. I could prove it by pointing out her erratic behavior. That way, she had nowhere to go if she tried to leave.
- I convinced everyone around her that she was incapable of caring for the children because of her stupidity, mental illness, and laziness.
- I ripped the phone cord out of the wall during a fight when she tried to call for help or threw her cell phone.
- I had her back me up on illegal things so that I could hold it over her head if she tried to leave.

I'd make her doubt her sanity and capabilities:

- Convince her she was crazy by playing mind games with her. I'd hide her things, and tell her how incompetent she was so that she'd believe me when I told her that she needed me.
- I kept her up in the night fighting so that she was too tired to wake up with the kids the next morning.
- I turned the kids against her by making her the bad parent and tricking the children. I would make her hit the children by saying her or me (and I would hit them harder) and then threaten her to report child abuse if she left me.
- I made her feel guilty about wanting to break up our family, that she was being a bad mother and wife if she wanted to leave every time things got difficult.
- I told her how fat and ugly she was all the time, and how badly she did things around the house. I told her how embarrassed I was of her.
- I told her that no one else would want my sloppy seconds, that she was used goods.
- I'd rape her.

I made her afraid of leaving me:

- I told her that women's shelters were for women who really needed it, not for women who wanted to give up on their family, not for whores and prostitutes.
- I made sure she knew that she wouldn't get a dime from me if she left and that she'd be poor and homeless. I ruined her credit by putting things in her name and not paying them.
- I followed her without her knowing so that I could make her believe I had people watching her.
- I threatened suicide.
- I told her I would kill her and take the children.

A Survivor's Roadmap to Recovery

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MENTORING SURVIVORS

"These Christians ain't got a clue what my life is like..."

Bonding with girls-

Sometimes, you will need to be the Hatchet and sometimes you will need to be the friend. From my experience, it is hard to be both. It is vital for survivors to have healthy structure and boundaries so a Hatchet, someone who enforces the rules, is important.

Part of being a good friend is also being vulnerable yourself. These girls are not dummies: they can smell sincerity. *You can't con a con.*

"You have to actually get close enough with someone for them to catch your 'disease'."

Iron Sharpens Iron

Life is surrounded with people: it's just the way it is. Real life interaction (like hatchets, mentors, roommates, counselors) will prepare them for real life. They MUST learn healthy interaction.

Purpose and Value

What lured these vulnerable girls out of their home is the promise of a brighter future. Whether it be freedom from an unhealthy home, financial security, excitement, or someone to love them- they all wanted something they were willing to RISK Their Life for.

1. Take the time to create a "roadmap" or "dream board" or "plan of action" - whatever you want to call it. Help them think of what they want to be or do when they grow up. Career? Husband? Healthy Home for their own family?
2. Identify the steps it will take to get them there.
3. Write these down and encourage them that they can do it.

Hold them accountable to their roadmap. It is easy to forget the motivation behind their desire to change. Remind them of what they are fighting for.

"It is easy to choose the game, it takes a strong person to choose to do the right thing."

FAMILY SUPPORT/EDUCATION

they need to enjoy
being normal!

A lot of victims of sex trafficking have no idea what being "normal" is like. They often come from abusive homes, whether sexual or physical. They have been on the streets or with their abuser for so long that the idea of even being normal has been engraved in their minds as a bad thing.

No one girl is the same - take time with each every one to develop new habits and a new normal that SHE will actually enjoy!

New Surroundings

Teens that return to the same community, friends and schools are going to have a harder time adjusting.

Memories from certain houses, parks or routes home will spark thoughts like a Vietnam Vet.

different groups
of friends
- support them bc
available
new friend

Girls who have experienced forced prostitution or DMST have been proven to suffer from

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Encourage girls to get involved with a youth group or new circle of friends. Move if possible, even to a different part of town allowing the girl to enroll in a new school district. Give her every opportunity possible to embrace and accept the new person that she is!

Each new journey in our lives as survivors' means new levels of healing. Someday having a healthy relationship will STILL bring up fears and insecurities. Someday having children will STILL reveal more healing that needs to occur. Teaching survivors how to handle each new level of healing is imperative to her lifelong success!

1. Identify the old habit that is being displayed.
2. Throw away old baggage.
3. Keep the good stuff: remind her of what that is constantly.
4. Make a roadmap to her new future.
5. Hold her accountable to that roadmap.
6. Show her how to handle real "issues" that life will throw her way (mean bosses or teachers, unpleasant co-workers, etc...) in a healthy manner.
7. Remember that these are tools, but EVERY girl is different and will need to accept each stage differently.