

Tonya spent night after night in different hotel rooms, with different men, all at the command of someone she once trusted. She was held against her will, beaten and made to feel like she had no other option at the time, all by the man she thought she loved.

“He approached me and told me in so many words, ‘I want you to have sex with this guy for money,’” Tonya said. “I was very uncomfortable and I kept saying no, I didn’t want to do it. He kept telling me, ‘If you love me, you’ll do this. It’s just one thing. Just try it.’”

While any child can be targeted by a trafficker, research, data and survivor lived experience and expertise have revealed traffickers and buyers often target youth who lack strong support networks, have experienced violence in the past, are experiencing homelessness, or are marginalized by society.

Traffickers are masters of manipulation and prey upon vulnerabilities using psychological pressure, false promises actions of perceived love/support and intimidation to control and sexually exploit the child for their benefit.

NCMEC

Polaris

Many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, and by family members, including parents.

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