

Protect Yourself and Family from Becoming a Human Trafficking Victim!

No one wants to be a victim of human trafficking. Human trafficking is when a person is forced, coerced, or tricked into doing work against their will. There are many forms of human trafficking, also known as modern day slavery, which exist in the world today. Two main categories are forced labor, as in the making of goods or working in agriculture fields against your will or because of indebtedness to the employer, and sex trafficking, or forced prostitution and pornography. No one wants to be a slave, yet there are 27 million people enslaved in the 21st century.

Unlike the transatlantic slave trade, modern slavery is not the backbone of western civilization or in something easily recognized. But those who hold others captive and force them to work against their will are making profits off this crime. In fact, human trafficking is estimated to be a 32 billion dollar industry.

Some schemes that may seem legitimate, but are used to lure people into captivity include seasonal farm workers, hotel and restaurant work, domestic servants, nannies, and student travel programs. There are many reputable organizations that provide these types of employment and educational programs. However, traffickers routinely use the lure of paying jobs and an education to separate their victims from their money (for travel visas and recruiting fees) and family. Once separated a trafficker may sell the individual to another or force them to work off "travel debt" such as transportation, food, and housing. This debt is at astronomical interests rates, which accumulate daily, and can never be paid off.

Victims of human trafficking come from all walks of life and all financial status. But there are some factors that make a person more vulnerable to the false lies of a human trafficker. Some factors of vulnerability are

- Being a female
- Being a child
- Coming from a marginalized population
- Poverty
- Growing up in an abusive home
- Running away from home
- Little or no education.

Protect yourself.

Although changing the above vulnerability factors is difficult, there are some things to do to avoid becoming a human trafficking victim. Be aware of how traffickers recruit people. Traffickers make false promises of a better life. They paint unrealistic pictures of what life could be like with lots of money. They quickly befriend a person showering

them with gifts and displays of affection, particularly recruiters who will later force a girl into prostitution.

Do not make decisions under the influence of substances and do not be the company of people you do not fully know and trust while intoxicated. Traffickers, looking to put someone into prostitution, will take advantage unconscious people or someone who cannot fight being transported elsewhere. Traffickers will also attempt to take advantage of those with addictions or attempt to create drug dependency.

If someone, whether stranger or acquaintance, promises something that seems too good in return for sex or free work, wait. Listen to the intuitive voice inside your head, check with family and friends for advice. Do internet searches or background checks on the person wanting you to go with them. Say no and see how they react. Look for signs of abusive or possessive behaviors. Is the person trying to isolate or turn you against family and friends? If so, avoid that person.

Runaways are at particular risk for being forced into prostitution. If leaving home because of abuse try to find a safe place; [Forsaken Generation](#) has resources to locate shelters. Or call the runaway switchboard at 1800-Runaway for help. If you are already on the streets try to find a safe place like [Children of The Night](#).

If coming from a life of poverty the lure of a better income or education is hard to resist. Check and double check if the agency or recruiters are reputable. Do they have references from people living where they want to send you? Make sure all contracts signed are in your native language, to understand all the details. Ask lots of questions. Find out, from another source, what a reasonable travel and recruiting expense would be. Ask for pictures of housing and names of people, companies, or schools that can be contacted. Human traffickers will typically avoid those who are asking too much, they want easy targets. Someone looking for a legitimate employee or student will honor the questions, knowing that you would be a valuable employee or student.

Protect your children.

Be aware of your child's online friends. Sex traffickers have been documented using social media like Facebook and Myspace, in addition to others. Love your children unconditionally. Sometimes awful problems exist between parents and kids; seek help through counseling, mentor programs, and rehab if necessary. Traffickers prey on runaways and throwaways. Do not make your child one. Life on the streets is extremely dangerous.

None of the above suggestions are foolproof. However, if these suggestions are implemented then fewer people would become victims of human trafficking. Evil exists in the world. Protect yourself and family.

Robin Rossmanith is a mother of three from Jacksonville, FL, who was working part time in retail when she learned about human trafficking. Wanting to contribute to the fight against modern day slavery Robin joined the local task force in 2007. In 2010, Robin became the co-chair of the Northeast Florida Human Trafficking Task Force leading individuals and agencies in a community wide effort to prevent human trafficking, rescue and restore victims and prosecute traffickers. In 2010, she also began [Shop To Stop Slavery](#), a website dedicated to informing consumers about products made with forced labor and providing opportunities for consumers to purchase slave free goods. Shop to Stop Slavery seeks to engage everyone in the efforts to end human trafficking.