

# **HT Awareness VS HT Understanding**

**Why language and imagery matter in the real world**





**What do most people know?**  
**How does it differ from reality?**  
**Why does it matter?**  
**Reframing Human Trafficking**

And a tool ..... or two for you to share!



LIAM NEESON

# TAKEN



I am ...

... race any race any race  
... any age any age any age  
... nationality any nationality any  
... held against my will.



# Human Trafficking: Hidden in Plain Sight





# It can happen to anyone?



"It's Happening Right There in Our Backyards"


Depends: What Else Is in Your Backyard?



# Trafficking Doesn't Happen in a Vacuum

## Vulnerabilities to trafficking





**KNOW THE SIGNS OF  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Are you, or is someone you know, a victim of human trafficking?

- carries around keys for hotel rooms
- seems to be under the control of another person
- seems to be under continual surveillance
- has all contacts controlled and monitored
- doesn't manage his/her own finances
- does not possess own ID or travel documentation
- lies about age
- works excessively
- lives in poor or cramped conditions
- is not paid or is paid very little
- lives with employer
- speaks little or none of the local language
- exhibits fear of being deported
- is seldom alone and is not allowed privacy
- has visible scars, burns, lacerations, and bruises
- has injuries around head
- has untreated infections and sickness
- appearance betrays unsanitary living conditions

**If you think that you or someone you know may be a victim of trafficking please call our hotline for help 845-562-5340**



# What this slide leaves out .....

- Likely to come from a community impacted by inequity and racism and its generational manifestations in our economy and our society including
  - People of color
  - LGBTQ+ people
  - Indigenous people
    - immigrants



So what's the downside .....



In the vast majority of situations of trafficking, the victim knows - and in many cases loves and trusts - the trafficker.



*“I never thought of myself as needing rescue. This was just my life.”*

*“Understanding what happened to you as trafficking is a really important part of healing. It took me 10 years to realize ‘hey wow, I was trafficked,’ because my situation was so different from what I had seen represented as trafficking.”*



## KNOW THE STORY NOT THE SIGNS

You spot a young woman in a restaurant who is inappropriately dressed, looks very unhappy, and an angry, much older man in a suit is grabbing at her arm.

### YOU ARE SEEING

- ☐ A An obvious sex trafficking situation.
- ☐ B A upset teenager out to dinner with her father.
- ☐ C A bad date.
- ☐ D You have no idea.

Share to... Highlight More

## KNOW THE STORY NOT THE SIGNS

You buy, renovate and resell houses. You check in on one and find men living in the unfinished house, without running water. They tell you they work for a subcontractor and he makes them live there.

### YOU SHOULD

- ☐ A Report what you saw to the Trafficking Hotline.
- ☐ B Call the police immediately, this is clearly labor trafficking.
- ☐ C Do nothing. You don't mind people watching the property.

Share to... Highlight More





## Learn. Teach. Evolve Understanding

- Change awareness from “know the signs” to understand the real story (vulnerability)
- Move away from “See say something. Say something” to awareness and action based on context and proximity
- Move language and imagery away from rescue and sensationalism toward empowering survivors and prompting self-recognition in people who may need support.



## Beginning

**Recruitment:** Human trafficking victims are rarely picked at random. They are targeted for vulnerabilities that make them susceptible to the enticement the trafficker has to offer. That enticement depends on the type of trafficking and the victim.

**Grooming:** Victims are manipulated slowly and expertly until something they would never ordinarily do or accept becomes something that feels normal and even necessary.

## Middle

### Trafficking, coercion and control:

The methods traffickers use to control victims may include violence, but often do not. Instead, labor trafficking victims are controlled through threats (like the threat of deportation) or economic abuse, such as wage theft and debt bondage. In sex trafficking situations, coercion and control is often a toxic cocktail of violence, confused loyalty, economic or physical need, love, manipulation and abuse.

## End

**Exit and healing:** While there are organizations that claim to “rescue” human trafficking victims, the reality is that adult survivors rescue themselves. That process generally takes place over time as the person in the situation begins to recognize that they want to change the way they are living, or that they are in an abusive job or relationship. Sometimes they seek help and services, and sometimes they make their own ways toward freedom.



**Shame**

Violence/threats  
of violence

**Debt bondage**



Isolation



**Love**

**Drugs/addictions**



Manipulated  
sense of self

**Fear**

Threats to  
loved ones

Immigration threats



**✗ Chains, handcuffs, rope or other hardware that suggest the physical constraint of victims**





# EXIT SCENARIOS and the RESCUE COMPLEX







Listen to survivors – they are the real experts



Understand proximity and context



Have hard conversations with friends and family



Stop using sensationalistic images



Stop talking about “rescuing” or “saving” people



Support legislation and organizations working to change the conditions that make trafficking possible

## Sample end card:

Is your boss threatening you, withholding your paycheck, or restricting your movements?  
Do you feel pressured to have sex for money, shelter, or other things you need?

**Contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline.**

**Call 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733**

**Free confidential help is available 24 hours a day.**

**Polaris**

[polarisproject.org](https://polarisproject.org)

**NATIONAL  
HUMAN  
TRAFFICKING  
HOTLINE**

[humantraffickinghotline.org](https://humantraffickinghotline.org)



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