



# BROKEN VOICES

**A Methodological Guide to the Film**

Part of the educational project TOGETHER AGAINST GROOMING

# Methodological Guide to the *Film Broken Voices*

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# Annotation

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The film **Broken Voices** offers a subtle yet powerful story about the sexual abuse of an adolescent girl in an environment where one might least expect it. The abuse is preceded by a series of small, seemingly insignificant signs of manipulation (grooming) that are easy to overlook yet they play a crucial role in the development of any case of sexual abuse. From the perspective of preventing child sexual abuse, it is essential to talk about these signs openly.

We offer screenings of the film **Broken Voices** together with a methodological guide designed for awareness-raising and educational purposes. The material also includes suggestions for interactive activities with children that can help them better understand the film's key themes. It addresses common misconceptions (myths) about child sexual abuse and explains the dynamics and warning signs of grooming. Reflecting on the impact of grooming—not only on the victim—can help reduce the risk of insensitive responses toward survivors of sexual abuse. Rather than judging or blaming victims (victim blaming), participants in the post-screening activities are invited to cultivate empathy and solidarity with the victim. The methodological guide outlines a range of ways in which even minors can contribute to the prevention of sexual abuse, particularly when someone from their peer group is in the position of a (potential) victim. In short, peers' attitudes matter greatly.

The methodological guide concludes by emphasising the importance of communicating information about available sources of help, adapted to the specific national or regional context. It also offers guidance on how to respond if a child or adolescent discloses their own experience of sexual abuse.

We recommend the film **Broken Voices** primarily for students at upper secondary schools (ages 15+). However, for cognitively mature students, the screening followed by a facilitated reflection and discussion may be appropriate from the age of 12.



# 1 Basic information about the film

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**Title** / Sbormistr / Zbormajster /Broken Voices

**Premiere** / 10. 7. 2025

**Genre** / drama

**Runing time** / 106 min

**Countries of origin** / Czechia, Slovakia

**Director and screenwriter** / Ondřej Provažník

**Starring** / Kateřina Falbrov, Juraj Loj, Maya Kintera, Aneřka Novotn, Anna Michalcov, Ivana Wojtylov, Zuzana řulajov, Marek Cisovsk

**Production** / Jiř Konen, Ivan Ostrochovsk

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## Theme

The film Broken Voices offers a subtle yet powerful story **about the sexual abuse of an adolescent girl** in an environment where one would (perhaps) least expect it. The abuse is preceded by a series of small signs of manipulation (grooming) that are easy to overlook yet play a crucial role during any case of sexual abuse. The sexual scene itself appears only once, at the very end of the film. It is filmed with exceptional sensitivity and **without explicit depiction**—the viewer is aware of what is happening but is not directly exposed to it.

## Story

Thirteen-year-old Valerie is trying to gain admission to a famous girls' choir in which her older sister, Lucie, already sings. A place in the choir offers the prospect of grand concert experiences, both at home and abroad. However, the number of available places is limited, and nothing is guaranteed. The selection lies entirely in the hands of the charismatic yet authoritarian choirmaster, the thirty-five-year-old Vtzslav Mcha. Within an extremely competitive group, Valerie strives to assert herself and earn the respect of the admired choirmaster. Yet the fragile negotiation of a creative relationship with an authority figure whose methods Valerie is unable to fully grasp gradually slips out of control.

## Narrative perspective

The story is told through the eyes of a girl on the threshold of adolescence. Among a group of older competitors, she naturally feels insecure. She compares herself to them—appearance, voice, the potential to stand out. She longs for acceptance from her peers and for positive feedback from the choirmaster. She has no awareness of the dangers that lie along the path toward fulfilling her dreams. There is no way for her to know.

## Context

The film Broken Voices is loosely inspired by the well-known case of sexual abuse in the children's choir Bambini di Praga. The story is set in the early 1990s; however, the risks it highlights remain equally relevant today. This applies to any environment in which children are involved and where measures to prevent sexual abuse are either absent or inconsistently implemented.

## 2 Educational potential of the film

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### The film illustrates the dynamics of grooming

Sexual abuse is most often preceded and accompanied by grooming. Grooming can be understood as a process of luring, seduction, “drawing someone in,” and manipulation. Through a range of manipulative and controlling techniques, the groomer seeks to get people where they want them to be: to lure the victim into a trap and induce their cooperation, while dulling the vigilance of those in the surrounding social environment and paralysing their capacity to intervene.

In relation to a selected victim, the groomer pays close attention to the child’s vulnerabilities—especially unmet needs and desires. They behave in ways that create the impression that they are acting solely in the child’s best interest. They give the child excessive attention, display unusual signs of affection, and may offer gifts or various privileges. They actively seek opportunities to be alone with the child. They cross boundaries of what is appropriate, ethical, and legal, while simultaneously creating the impression that such behaviour is normal.

### The film highlights the power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim

The perpetrator has access to multiple sources of power. Their power extends far beyond physical superiority. Compared to the victim, they possess a substantial advantage in life experience, are better able to read people and to influence them. Their professional position enables them to make decisions about those entrusted to them or subordinate to them, including the power to reward and punish. As a recognised authority, they create the impression that whatever they do or say is legitimate, because they supposedly know best what should be done and how. They also exercise power over how transparently they handle the information at their disposal. The victim is at a fundamental disadvantage compared to the perpetrator.

There is no equal or partnership-based relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. Even if the victim were in love with the perpetrator, it is the perpetrator’s responsibility not to cross the boundaries of the professional relationship. It is the role of adults to support the healthy development of children and to protect them from all forms of maltreatment and exploitation.

### The film subtly yet convincingly challenges myths about child sexual abuse

We might wish for sexual abuse to be easy and quick to identify. However, this is rarely the case. Our distorted ideas **about evil, perpetrators, victims, and the people around them** can stand in the way of understanding how cases of child sexual abuse actually occur. No matter how disturbing the reality may be, only by grounding ourselves in it can we adopt appropriate and responsible attitudes.

- **The evil** of child sexual abuse can occur anywhere—even in prestigious settings and within groups engaged in beautiful, socially valued, and widely respected activities. Evil often does not manifest explicitly, but through subtle hints. It may not appear dramatic. Instead, it is often (for an indefinite period) shrouded in silence. Usually, it does not reach an immediate conclusion in the form of exposure, conviction, and the just punishment of the perpetrator.
- **A perpetrator** of child sexual abuse can be someone we would never suspect. They may even be a person known to the child and their community, someone who is liked and trusted. They do not appear as a pervert or a dangerous monster, but as an ordinary person. They may possess many good qualities and skills, perform acts of kindness, or create valuable works. Their evil intentions are not written on their forehead, and they may not be thinking of them constantly. It is enough that they abuse their power whenever an opportunity arises.
- Any child can become **a victim** of sexual abuse, even one with loving and caring parents. It is enough for a child to encounter, in their everyday environment, someone more powerful who abuses their position of power over the child. A child’s vulnerability is closely linked to their immaturity – physical, psychological, and social. Children, even in their adolescence, have not yet fully developed the ability to resist various temptations, evaluate risks, or foresee the potential consequences of their decisions. They can easily fall into a trap of manipulation without knowing how to break free.

- **The surrounding social environment**—children’s parents, other adults, as well as the victim’s peers— usually does not recognise the subtle signs of evil or tends to overlook them indulgently. When evaluating possible suspicions, people often side with the perpetrator, as they too may be influenced by the perpetrator’s charm, authority, or power. In most cases, the social environment is not present as a direct witness to the crime. It lacks key information. And if the social circle cannot decipher the silent signals of the victim’s trauma, it fails to offer a helping hand.

### **The film contributes to the prevention of secondary victimisation**

The film demonstrates what precedes sexual abuse (grooming) and how complex the victim’s situation is. Once this is understood, our tendency to victim blaming is weakened. Suddenly, even seemingly illogical or counterintuitive behaviour on the part of the victim begins to make sense. A victim may harbour positive or ambivalent feelings toward the perpetrator because they also perceive their better qualities. When an attack occurs, the victim may be paralyzed by the trust they placed in that person, by fear, or by a sense of utter helplessness. Compliance does not mean consent; it reflects neither their character nor their morality. A victim’s ability to speak out is deeply intertwined with the social environment’s willingness to listen.

### **The film addresses viewers with a quiet call to offer victims a helping hand**

Child sexual abuse is not “nothing at all.” Its consequence is not a momentary discomfort, but trauma—a deep wound to the psyche. It constitutes a serious intrusion into a child’s sexual, psychological, and social development. Above all, it undermines the victim’s self-esteem, erodes their trust in others, and shatters their sense of safety in the world.

The risk of long-term negative consequences increases if timely help is not provided, or if those who learn about the abuse react inappropriately.

Peers also play a significant role in the victim’s recovery process. This is partly because when a young victim decides to confide in someone, they are more likely to turn to a peer than to an adult.

### **The film raises a burning question: “Could the abuse have been prevented?”**

Within the film’s narrative, numerous warning signs of grooming are present. Yet no one addresses them. In doing so, the film points to the **need for implementing measures to prevent child sexual abuse** in organisations that work with children (safeguarding policies). Such measures should include clear definitions of what forms of behaviour are inappropriate and must not be tolerated. It is equally important that both adults and children know where and how to report behaviour that has the characteristics of grooming, and where they can seek help. The potential to help victims increases when people know what they can do. Passive **bystanders** can then become **upstanders**—those who stand up for what is right.

## 3 Educational goals

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The primary objective of this methodological guide is to contribute to the prevention of child sexual abuse and to prevent secondary victimisation of those who have already become victims.

By using this material, you can help (not only) students to:

- understand the role that grooming plays in cases of sexual abuse and recognise its warning signs,
- think critically about the power held by the perpetrator and why the perpetrator bears responsibility for how that power is exercised,
- correct common misconceptions (myths) about child sexual abuse,
- increase empathy toward victims and strengthen the readiness to offer them a helping hand.

## 4 Recommendations Prior to the Film Screening

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- **Content Warning.** – Before the screening, it is essential to openly inform students that the film addresses the sensitive topic of sexual abuse, particularly the circumstances that precede it. Although the film's approach is sexually non-explicit, it is appropriate to emphasize that certain scenes may feel uncomfortable or distressing. This warning is not intended to discourage viewers, but rather to allow them to consciously prepare for the gravity of the subject matter. Prior transparency fosters a safe atmosphere and reduces the risk of any participant being caught off guard or unsettled by the film.
- **Explanation of key themes.** – Before the screening, it is important to briefly introduce students to the themes addressed by the film (see the educational potential of the film). If students are to gain the most from the screening, they need a key to “how to read” the film—otherwise, much of its core message may be missed. If they are familiar with the basic concepts and understand what to focus on, they will more easily notice these aspects and will be better prepared for subsequent discussion.



## 5 Recommendations After the Film Screening (Prior to Follow-up Activities)

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**Establishing rules for respectful communication.** – The film may evoke memories or associations related to a wide range of experiences—whether in the role of a victim, a witness, a close person to a victim, a participant in conversations, or a consumer of media content related to the topic. If someone chooses to share such an experience, this should be welcomed and valued. Others should **respond with respect and gratitude** for the trust shown. Sharing is voluntary, and no one should be pressured to do so. Inform students of the goals of the screening and the subsequent reflection (see the educational goals). Establishing this framework helps prevent unpleasant situations (such as mockery, questioning, or blaming) and fosters trust within the peer group.

**Preventing retraumatisation.** – The topic of sexual abuse is challenging for everyone—even for those without personal experience. The mere awareness that such acts occur, and that they may be committed by people who are expected to protect children, can be psychologically distressing. Therefore, it is **essential that the discussion takes place in a calm atmosphere, within the so-called window of tolerance**—a state in which we can process and integrate stimuli. Keeping students within this safe framework can be achieved through very **simple measures** (see tips below).

### Tips for Preventive Stabilization Techniques During Discussion:

- a) **Small hand-held objects** – e.g., stress balls, fabric strips, or strings that can be tied and untied. These help with focus while simultaneously regulating tension.
- b) **Mint or fruit sweets, chewing gum** – a pleasant taste and the act of chewing help with grounding in the present moment.
- c) **Access to drinking water** – a discreet and natural way to self-regulate.
- d) **Short micro-breaks** – after a challenging discussion question, allow a moment of silence, time to write down one's own thoughts, or to draw a symbol or emotion on paper.
- e) **An element of creativity** – providing paper and pencils for doodling or drawing while listening. This helps some students concentrate better and process their emotions.
- f) **A simple shared activity** – for example, at the beginning or in the middle of the discussion, a brief exercise such as: “Let’s all take a deep breath together—and slowly breathe out.” (The teacher can frame this as a “mental reset” or a “moment of release before the next part of the discussion.”)

Such stabilisation techniques can be integrated preventatively and discreetly, making them effective for all students, not just those experiencing a difficult moment. This approach reduces the risk of potential stigmatisation.

- **Professional support** – It is advisable to involve a school psychologist or guidance counsellor in the discussion or follow-up activities. Their presence can strengthen students' sense of safety while also bringing more specialised insight into the topics that emerge during the reflection on the film.

# 6 Suggested activities with students following the film screening

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In this section, we offer four themes that follow a logical progression to help fully utilise the film's educational potential. It is difficult to estimate how much time each of the proposed activities will take, as much depends on how your students react.

**Each of the suggested activities can be allocated its own full lesson period.**

## 6.1 Grooming – warning signs (red flags) and impact

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### Key questions to facilitate reflection and discussion:

1. What did the choirmaster do to gain Valerie's trust and admiration?
2. What kinds of "special" attention or privileges did he provide her with?
3. Which scenes in the film initially appeared "innocent," but in hindsight revealed manipulation? At which moments did the choirmaster's behaviour cease to be professional and appropriate?
4. What effect (impact) did grooming have on the individual characters?
  - a) Valerie?
  - b) The other choir members?
  - c) The children's parents?
  - d) The choirmaster's mother?

What influenced the fact that they did not resist or intervene? What went unnoticed? How did they interpret the situation in ways that led them not to assume harmful intentions on the part of the choirmaster?

**Tip:** The final question can be discussed in plenary, or students can be divided into four groups. Each group will focus on a different set of characters (a, b, c, d). After the allotted time has passed, the groups will present their findings.

### Additional questions:

1. What other forms of grooming (luring, manipulation) that were not depicted in the film are you aware of, or have you heard about?
2. Why is it important that a relationship between a professional (in any of the helping professions) and a child does not evolve into something else that presents itself as friendship, a romantic relationship, or a sexual involvement?
  - How could this harm the child?
  - How could this harm other children within the same group or collective?

**Tip:** A clear overview of examples of emotional, relational, communicative, and physical boundary violations, as well as abuses of power, can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## 6.2 Children's voices in shaping effective prevention strategies

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### **Creative activity (preparing a presentation based on assigned tasks):**

If people do not know what kind of behaviour constitutes grooming, they are more likely to overlook, tolerate, or fail to report it. You can task the students with reflecting on the following:

- a) **How can awareness of grooming be raised more effectively within the school (or another organisation) that students attend?** Should awareness-raising materials take the form of text, audio, or video? Where should they be placed? How often should they be offered? Students can discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different forms of awareness-raising and propose which might work best for the current generation of teenagers. The group can summarise the arguments for their proposals and then present them to the whole group.
- b) **How should reporting mechanisms be set up (for concerns regarding grooming or sexual abuse) to ensure they are functional?** Would an anonymous reporting box work? Anonymous surveys? An anonymous online form? A specific email address for submissions? A designated person within the school (or another organisation) they could approach in person? An external organisation they could report to? Or something else? A combination of multiple options? Students can discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each reporting method. Which forms do they currently find most appealing and trustworthy? Each group can creatively develop their vision of a functional and credible reporting system, explain their rationale, and then present it to the whole group.

**Tip:** To save time, you can divide students into two groups, with one group working on task (a) and the other on task (b). To increase motivation, students may imagine that they will later present their proposals or visions to other audiences as well (for example, to those responsible for coordinating prevention activities at schools, to school leadership, or to a parents' assembly). **Children's voices matter wherever adults make decisions about preventive measures.**

## 6.3 Victim blaming is not cool

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### **Pair training:**

The way a victim behaved or reacted before, during, and after sexual abuse may appear strange, incomprehensible, or counterintuitive to many people. It is precisely this that some use as a reason to reproach, ridicule, or doubt victims.

Children, too, may encounter situations where their peers express opinions that harm victims. It is not necessary (nor appropriate, given the risk of retraumatization) to provide specific examples of what such hurtful statements might sound like. Instead, it is more useful to practice how children can respond to such statements—in a way that adheres to the principles of respectful communication while also standing up for victims.

Write the three most common counterintuitive reactions of victims on the board:

- a) During the sexual abuse, the victim did not scream, cry, fight the perpetrator, or run away.
- b) After sexual abuse, the victim does not seek help immediately, does not talk about it right away, and does not go to the police straight away
- c) After the sexual abuse, the victim remains in contact with the perpetrator, continues to communicate with them, and does not show overt anger.

**Divide the students into pairs at random.** One student from the pair freely chooses one of the statements (a–c) written on the board. They repeat it to their partner and add: "I don't get it; that just doesn't make any sense."

The task of the second student in the pair is to try to explain what reasons a victim might have for such counterintuitive reactions. The goal is to evoke greater empathy toward the victim.

After five minutes, they switch roles and address another statement from the board.

**Tip:** **Appendix 2** offers a reference tool that can be used to further develop or refine the explanations generated by students.

### Activity Debrief/Evaluation:

Ask the students how they fared during this task. Was it difficult for them to find explanations for some of the victims' counterintuitive reactions? (Supplement their explanations if necessary.) How did they feel during the process? What did they realise? Can they imagine using something they've learned in their everyday lives if they encounter victim blaming among their peers?

**Emphasize that whenever victim blaming occurs within a peer group**—even in response to sexual abuse cases that happened elsewhere and are being discussed in the media or on social media—it is always harmful. It discourages victims from coming forward and plays right into the hands of the perpetrators.

## 6.4 How bystanders can become those who stand up for victims (from bystanders to upstanders)

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### Micro-education and brainstorming:

**Explain the bystander effect to the students.** This is a common social phenomenon in which multiple people witness inappropriate behaviour but do not intervene. There can be several reasons for this, for example: everyone assumes someone else will act; they are uncertain (about whether the observed behaviour is or is not acceptable); they are afraid; or they simply do not know how they could intervene. It is crucial to realise that everyone's attitude matters. If boundaries are not set against evil, it spreads.

**Present the students with a repertoire of ways to intervene** if they notice an adult acting like a groomer:

- **Direct confrontation** – clearly naming the inappropriate behaviour out loud. For example: “What you’re doing is not okay. We’ve learned about grooming.”
- **Distraction** – finding a way to interrupt the situation and enable the victim to leave. For example: “Valerie, come on, the girls are looking for you.” / “Excuse me, Mr. [Teacher], I have a question about tomorrow’s exam.”
- **Involving another adult (Delegation)** – alerting others to the situation and asking them to intervene. This might include other teachers, a school psychologist, or parents. The more people who are aware of what is happening and can help, the better.
- **Responding later** – lending a supportive hand to the victim is possible even after the fact, and it is still deeply meaningful. For example: “I saw what happened, and it wasn't right. Are you okay?” / “Hey, you're not in this alone; I'm standing by you.” / “If you want, we can go tell someone together.”

Emphasise that a child has the **right to decide which strategy feels safe and feasible for them.**

**Return to the story of the film and invite students to brainstorm:** If you could step into the story and try to change the course of events, when and which type of intervention would you use? What exactly would you do? What would you say, and to whom?

# 7 Key points to remember in closing

## 7.1 Summary of the film's key messages

### Ask the students:

- What did you realise today? Did you experience any "aha" moments?
- What new things have you learned?
- What messages are you taking away? What would you like to pass on (e.g., share with your friends)?

Students' answers can be brief (a single word, a sentence, or even a symbol). Afterward, summarize the core ideas. For example: The blame for sexual abuse lies with the perpetrators, not the victims. Lending a helping hand to victims is vital. Each of us can contribute to prevention.

**Acknowledge the students** for the way they engaged in the discussion and activities. Thank them for their openness, trust, and the energy they devoted to reflecting on such a challenging topic. Use your own words and be authentic in your delivery.

## 7.2 Information on Seeking Help

Provide information about where students can seek help if they ever need it—for themselves or for someone else.

- **Child helpline:** [Insert name of national or regional helpline] [Insert phone number] (24/7), [free of charge / standard rate]

**Tip:** Show students a short video featuring a representative of your local helpline, explaining why, when and how to seek support. [Insert link or QR code here].

- **Children's Ombudsperson / Commissioner for Children:** [Insert link to the relevant national or regional office].
- **School-based contacts:** Provide contact details for designated staff members within the school whom students can approach if they need advice or wish to report concerns related to grooming or sexual abuse.
- **Reporting systems:** If your school operates an anonymous reporting box or an anonymous reporting system or has an agreement with an external platform providing a digital reporting tool, inform students about how this system works and how it can be used.

It is important to emphasise that **seeking help is okay—and the right thing to do.**

## 7.3 A short calming exercise

Wrap up with a simple activity to relax the students, set a positive tone, and strengthen their sense of safety and belonging. Examples include:

- **Group Breathing:** "Let's all take a deep breath in together... and slowly breathe out. Once more. Let's take this feeling of calm with us."
- **A gratitude exercise:** Everyone says aloud or writes down one small thing they are grateful for today.
- **A circle of wishes:** To close, everyone quietly thinks of someone to whom they would like to wish something good—whether themselves, a classmate, or someone close to them.

## 8 How to respond if a victim confides in you

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It is possible that there is a victim of sexual abuse within the group of children whom you were previously unaware of. The film or subsequent discussions and activities may give the victim the courage to seek help. If the child views you as a trustworthy person, they may turn to you.

In such a situation, it is crucial to give the child your **full attention** and avoid being distracted by other activities. While various questions may come to mind, be careful not to step into the role of a self-appointed investigator. Your primary task is to **actively listen** to what the child is saying. Do not make assumptions; if something is unclear, check that you have understood the child correctly.

**Manage your emotions.** Speak slowly and maintain a calm manner of communication.

**Assure the child that what happened is not their fault.** Do not judge or evaluate the child's behaviour before, during, or after the experiences of sexual abuse.

Reassure the child that **it was right to tell you what happened**, as this creates an opportunity to address the situation.

**Do not make promises you cannot keep.** If the child asks you in advance to keep the conversation a secret, explain that you cannot guarantee this. Clarify with whom and why serious information may need to be shared. Inform the child about the **next steps**. Once the conversation is over, create a **written record** of the discussion.

**Tip:** Readers are encouraged to seek out relevant **national or regional guidelines** in their own countries on how to conduct a conversation with a child in such situations. In Slovakia, a detailed online professional resource is available **in Slovak** (see QR code).



# Resources and Recommended Reading for Educators

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1. Berliner, L. (2018). The Concept of Grooming and How It Can Help Victims. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33(1), 24–27.
2. Erooga, M., Kaufman, K., & Zarkin, J. G. (2020). Powerful perpetrators, hidden in plain sight: An international analysis of organisational child sexual abuse cases. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 26(1), 62–90.
3. Karkošková, S. (2016). *Obete sexuálneho zneužívania detí medzi nami. 2. upravené vydanie. Veľký Šariš – Kanaš: Ascend.*
4. Karkošková, S. (2021). *Sexuálne zneužívanie detí vo svetle výskumných poznatkov. Pezinok: Justičná akadémia Slovenskej republiky.*
5. Karkošková, S. (2022). *Odborné postupy v pedagogickej a poradenskej praxi: Dieťa ako objekt groomingu (prevencia sexuálneho zneužívania v organizáciách). Bratislava: Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie*
6. Karkošková, S. (2022). *Odborné postupy v pedagogickej a poradenskej praxi: Sexuálne zneužívané dieťa v edukačnom aj poradenskom procese – Ako viesť rozhovor so suspektnou obeťou. Bratislava: Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie.*
7. Karkošková, S. (2022). *Safeguarding: koncepcia ochrany detí pred násilím v inštitúciách a organizáciách pracujúcich s deťmi (so zameraním na problematiku sexuálneho zneužívania detí). Bratislava: Národné koordináčne stredisko pre riešenie problematiky násilia na deťoch.*
8. McAlinden, A.-M. (2012). *„Grooming“ and the Sexual Abuse of Children: Institutional, Internet and Familial Dimensions. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*
9. Weiss, P. (2005). *Sexuální zneužívání dětí. Praha: Grada Publishing.*
10. Winters, G. M., & Jeglic, E. L. (2022). *Sexual Grooming: Integrating Research, Practice, Prevention, and Policy. Cham: Springer International Publishing.*

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# Appendix 1 : Examples of Professional Boundary Violations

## (Grooming Warning Signs)

Cluster	Examples (not an exhaustive list of warning signs)
<b>Crossing emotional boundaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favouring specific children without legitimate reasons.</li> <li>• Using subtle forms of control that allow a child to develop an inappropriate emotional dependence on the professional.</li> <li>• Positioning oneself as the child's "friend" or "personal advisor" (unless such a role is legitimately assigned to the professional).</li> <li>• Belittling or humiliating a child or deliberately communicating in ways that distress or unsettle the child.</li> </ul>
<b>Crossing relational boundaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entering into an intimate, romantic, or sexual "relationship" with a child.</li> <li>• Flirting with a child.</li> <li>• Expressing romantic feelings toward a child verbally, in writing, or in any other form.</li> <li>• Encouraging a child or children to address the professional by their first name when this is not customary within the organisation.</li> <li>• Deliberately meeting a child alone outside the organisation without a justified context and without prior approval from the organisation and/or parental consent (e.g., taking a child to a restaurant, cinema, or concert on one's own initiative; visiting the professional's private home, including invitations to such meetings).</li> <li>• Taking private photographs, audio, or video recordings of a child without organisational authorisation or parental consent.</li> <li>• Granting preferential treatment to a specific child without a legitimate justification (e.g., educational). This may include spending additional time with the child for inappropriate purposes or under inappropriate circumstances; giving the child a lift home without authorisation; or otherwise providing undue advantages.</li> <li>• Becoming involved in a child's family life without a legitimate reason, attempting to turn relationships with parents into friendships, inviting the child's parents to a private cottage/holiday home, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Abuse of power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving private gifts to a child (e.g., money, mobile phone credit, buying items or food).</li> <li>• Suggesting benefits (e.g., the certainty of a good grade at school) in exchange for sexual contact or implying negative consequences if the child were to refuse sexual contact.</li> <li>• Maneuvering a child into situations that provide the professional with uninterrupted one-on-one time with the child.</li> <li>• Persuading, bribing, or intimidating a child to remain silent about the professional's inappropriate behaviour or to keep their "relationship" secret.</li> <li>• Offering cigarettes, drugs, or alcohol to a child, or allowing a child to behave in ways that violate accepted standards of conduct and/or the organisation's rules.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Crossing communication boundaries</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposing children to pornographic or explicitly sexual material that is not part of the approved curriculum.</li> <li>• Making obscene gestures or using obscene language in the presence of a child.</li> <li>• Joking or making indirect sexual innuendos when communicating with a child.</li> <li>• Making inappropriate comments about a child's appearance, including overly flattering remarks.</li> <li>• Using inappropriate terms of endearment for specific children (e.g., sweetie, honey, darling).</li> <li>• Providing counselling to a child on personal matters if the professional is not authorized to do so.</li> <li>• Asking a child questions about their sexual experiences or relationships.</li> <li>• Sharing one's own sexual experiences, practices, or intimate partner/marital problems with a child.</li> <li>• Using letters or electronic communication (text messages, chats, etc.) to interact with a child about personal or sexual matters without a justified context.</li> <li>• Continuing an intimate or sexual conversation even if it was initiated by the child, when such a conversation falls outside the professional's role or competence.</li> <li>• Sharing confidential information about other clients or staff members in front of a child.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Crossing physical boundaries</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arbitrary (unjustified) exposure of one's body in front of a child.</li> <li>• Deliberate (unjustified) presence in situations where children are dressing or undressing or using the toilet.</li> <li>• Inappropriate intrusion into a child's personal or intimate space.</li> <li>• Initiating, permitting, or requiring inappropriate physical contact with a child (e.g., tickling, wrestling, giving or receiving shoulder massages).</li> <li>• Physical contact with a child without a justified reason or context (e.g., seemingly accidental touches, groping, hugging, stroking, or poking with hands or objects, kissing).</li> </ul>

**The text in the table is based on the original Slovak source:** Karkošková, S. (2022). Odborné postupy v pedagogickej a poradenskej praxi: Dieťa ako objekt groomingu (prevencia sexuálneho zneužívania v organizáciách) [Professional procedures in educational and counselling practice: The child as an object of grooming (prevention of sexual abuse in organisations)]. Bratislava: Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie.



## Appendix ② : A brief explanations of victims' counterintuitive reactions

These are reactions that do not align with our intuitive expectations of how a person “should” respond when they become a victim of violence. At first glance, victims' reactions may appear inappropriate, nonsensical, or illogical. However, they are **normal responses to abnormal circumstances in which victims find themselves**.

Intuitive expectations	Counterintuitive reactions of victims	
	Manifestations	Main reasons
<b>Active defence</b> (fight or flight)	<b>Outwardly passive reactions</b> (physical paralysis, psychological paralysis)	This is one type of the body's <b>instinctive response</b> to a threatening situation. It is not subject to conscious control and therefore cannot be interpreted as the victim's consent to the aggressor's actions. It is automatically activated especially when the victim experiences intense <b>fear</b> , feels <b>helpless</b> , or when the <b>harm is inflicted</b> by a <b>person who holds the victim's trust</b> .
<b>Prompt help-seeking and disclosure</b>	<b>Delayed disclosure</b> (after weeks, months, years, or even decades)	<p>The perpetrator may assign the violence an <b>alternative meaning that contradicts reality</b>, thereby confusing the victim. The victim may come to believe that the mistreatment is normal or that they deserve it.</p> <p>The perpetrator of the violence may be <b>perceived in a positive light</b> by others. Consequently, the victim fears that if they were to confide in someone, people would not believe them.</p> <p>If the perpetrator is <b>someone the child loves</b>, the child may remain silent to <b>protect them</b> from the potential adverse consequences of disclosure.</p> <p>If the victim is <b>existentially dependent</b> on the perpetrator (i.e., relying on them for sustenance, material provision, or care), silence becomes a necessary survival strategy.</p>
<b>Negative attitudes toward the perpetrator</b>	<b>Positive attitudes toward the perpetrator</b>	<p><b>The perpetrator may not harm the victim constantly and can possess a wide range of positive traits.</b> Consequently, the victim might not perceive them in purely negative terms; they may feel gratitude, admiration, or even love toward them.</p> <p><b>If others in the social environment hold positive attitudes</b> toward the perpetrator, the victim may realise that adopting a different stance would not be socially acceptable.</p>

The text in the table is based on the original Slovak source: Karkošková, S. (2020). Kontraintuitívne reakcie obetí násillia [Counterintuitive reactions of victims of violence]. Bratislava: Národné koordináčné stredisko pre riešenie problematiky násillia na deťoch.



More detailed explanations of these (and other) counterintuitive reactions can be found in:

- Karkošková, S. (2021). Sexuálne zneužívanie detí vo svetle výskumných poznatkov. Pezinok: Justičná akadémia Slovenskej republiky, s. 90–94.
- Karkošková, S. (2019). Proč se o mnohých případech sexuálního zneužívání dozvídáme až s odstupem let?. *Salve* 29(3), 61–68.
- Čírtková, L. (2017). Jak vysvětlit kontraintuitivní chování obětí? (1.). *Právo a rodina* 19(5), 1–4.
- Čírtková, L. (2017). Jak vysvětlit kontraintuitivní chování obětí? (2.). *Právo a rodina* 19(6), 6–10.

