

PLEASE CONTINUE READING THIS EVEN AFTER READING THE NEXT SENTENCE.

Sex/Human trafficking is here in Iowa. Are you still with me? Good, because this is important. On Tuesday, August 8, I attended a free showing of the documentary, Gridshock (<https://www.gridshockdocumentary.com/>). I attended this because the evil of buying and selling another person is so abhorrent to me that I wanted to be further educated about what I can do to help. The fact that there are people who think it is okay to strip a person of their humanity in order to satisfy their own pleasure centers, scares me to death. It could be someone I love who is a victim or even a buyer. But this documentary scared me even more when I learned that human trafficking is a major problem here in Iowa. One of the reasons that it is a major problem here is because so many people think it is not. *"This only happens in big cities, not in little ole Buffalo Center."* And therefore, people are not watching or worse yet, they simply do not care because it does not affect them. In this documentary, I listened to the stories of three women (from Iowa) who survived their ordeals, and I was shocked to hear the horrifying accounts they shared. We need to wake up because it is here in Iowa; safe, down to earth, conservative, heart of the Midwest, Iowa. Are you still with me? Good, then allow me to share some things we can be doing now.

(1) **Talk to your children about online safety.** Since the pandemic, online predators have been on the rise because, well, that's where their victims are. One of the ways that predators get their victims is through grooming. They befriend them. This is something that can happen over time, and therefore our children need to have safe social media practices, which leads me to number two.

(2) **Know what your children are doing online.** As parents, we simply cannot trust that our children are doing what they are supposed to be doing or refraining from what is unsafe. Therefore, insist on seeing their online activity. Friend them on their social media account(s). You do not need to Hoover and spy but be aware. And this leads me to number three.

(3) **Know who their friends are.** If your children talk about friends you do not know, make it a point to know them. If they are considerably older than your children, warning lights should be flashing like crazy.

**(4) And lastly (at least for this article) spend time with your children.** When I say this, it does not simply mean occupying the same address or room. Put down your phones and turn off your electronic devices. Actually be present with them. Talk to your children. Listen to them. Play with them. Take an active and authentic interest in their lives, their joys and sorrows. Let them know you care.

Sex/Human trafficking is here in Iowa. Let us wake up and see this problem for what it is. Keep the conversation going and pay attention. Learn all you can. And more importantly, pray, pray, and pray some more. God help us.