

Ben's Story

Ben is 15 years old and he loves school, but he is struggling at home because his parents drink all the time. Even though it is the middle of October, he decides to run away. Ben ends up sleeping in the park every night for two weeks. Ben realizes it is getting colder out each night, and he is running out of money for food.

One night, Ben is approached by a man who offers him \$20 for food. He accepts it because he is getting hungry. The next night, the same man brings Ben food and another \$20. This time, he says Ben can only have the food and money in exchange for sex. Ben feels scared, but he manages to say no. The man does not take back the food or the money. Instead, he offers Ben a spare room where he can stay and make money—by participating in sexual acts. The man gives Ben his address and says, “If you change your mind, the offer stands.”

Over the next few nights, Ben becomes hungrier, colder, and more desperate. He decides to go to the man's house, hoping he can stay for a few days until he figures out something better.

You notice Ben has not been at school for the past week. You send him a message to meet you at the mall. He shows up looking rough; his clothes are dirty, and his hair is greasy. He seems really on edge and nervous.

Using the *Look, Listen, Link, Live*® model, answer the following questions:

- STEP 1: LOOK. What are the signs that tell you Ben needs help?
- STEP 2: LISTEN. How would you approach Ben to talk to him? What would you say?
- STEP 3: LINK. Where would you link Ben for help and support?
- STEP 4: LIVE. How would you take care of yourself, and what suggestions would you have for Ben?