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Web Predators Work To Gradually Lure Victims

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## *Teen Says Man Groomed Her For Months*

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**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** -- Katie Canton met John on the Internet five years ago.

She was 15 and he was 22.

"He would tell me he loved me, that I was interesting, that he felt a connection with me," Canton said.

But the conversation eventually turned to sex.

"He sort of introduced topics that were uncomfortable, things like sex," Canton said. "He'd introduce them really slowly."

She said John romanced her for about two months.

"John sent me phone cards so there wouldn't be a phone bill," she recalled.

Canton's parents soon found out. They showed her a computer game called "Missing" that tells the story of a teen who meets a predator online. She said playing the game made her realize that John was grooming her for sex.

She broke off the relationship.

"These predators are smart," she said.

Police said it is a classic predator strategy to bring victims close with patience and persistence.

These days, they said keeping a home computer in a common room is a good idea, but not good enough.

Some predators are giving their victims wireless ways to stay in touch.

"I've heard of people being sent laptops, cell phones, pagers, voice mail services," Canton said.

"Now, kids have these cell phones that have multiple capabilities in terms of accessing the Internet, instant messaging, and the like," said Lt. Bob Lozito of the Sacramento Hi-Tech Crimes Task Force. "So the predators are migrating to that environment, as well."

Lozito said predators are even teaching their victims how to delete files and erase any trace of the relationship.

"The grooming is really all about trying to train somebody for behavior," said Lozito, who added that parents need to communicate with their children about the potential dangers of online relationships.

Today, Canton is an ambassador with Web Wise Kids, the nonprofit behind the Internet safety game that she credits with



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saving her.

Canton said John moved gradually and appeared to be nice.

"Parents and kids need to be aware of that, and not fall into that trap," she said.

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