



How to Talk to Kids about Sextortion

Sextortion is threatening to expose a person's sexual images to get them to do something they don't want to do, such as sending money or more photos.

Safety in the digital age is new, and children feel more comfortable navigating digital communities than their parents or caregivers.

But they do not inherently know how to stay safe when making digital connections. Here are a few things adults can do to help a child avoid getting into tricky or dangerous situations.

Talk about technology.

Children should grow up expecting their parents to be part of their digital lives.

- * Make regular check-ins about online interactions the norm.
- * Include children in setting rules and limits for screen time.

Talk about sexuality and relationships.

Talking about your family's expectations and values regarding sex and relationships is an important first step. These conversations should happen regularly.

- * Discuss the characteristics of healthy relationships, such as having and respecting boundaries and practicing consent.
- * Explain that pressuring someone into sexual behavior is never okay.
- * Offer advice on how to handle a situation where a person feels pressured to engage in sexual behavior they aren't comfortable with.

Be there unconditionally.

Kids experiencing sextortion are scared of getting in trouble. The abuser can use this fear to maintain control over the child. Tell the child they can tell you if someone is threatening to expose their photos or videos — no matter what they show.

If your child is experiencing sextortion:

1. Report sextortion to the app, site or platform.

These companies can help remove images and, in some cases, the threats. You can report the people threatening you, the threats themselves, and the shared images. Be sure to change account passwords as well.

2. If the victim is under 18, mention that.

Companies may take aggressive action if they know the victim is a minor. If a child has sent images or video, report it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at report.cybertip.org.

3. Save everything.

Block the blackmailer, but do not delete the child's profile or messages. Save texts, pictures, videos, websites, etc. Take screenshots and save web pages as PDFs.

Learn more at missingkids.org/sextortion



Our Kids is a Nashville-based clinic that provides expert medical evaluations and crisis counseling in response to concerns of child sexual abuse. For more, visit OurKidsCenter.com