

Online Sextortion: A Parent's Guide

Recognizing, responding, and supporting your child

Looking for a guide to share with your teen?
Online Sextortion: A Teen's Guide provides info for young people on recognizing online sextortion, what to do if it happens, and where to find help.

Online sextortion occurs when someone uses or threatens to share a young person's intimate images or personal information to coerce or manipulate them. Knowing what sextortion can look like and what to do can make it easier to help your child if it happens.

Is My Child Okay?

Many children won't immediately tell a trusted adult what's happening. Instead, you might notice:

- Becoming unusually withdrawn
- Increased secrecy around devices
- Anxiety when notifications appear
- Suddenly deleting accounts
- Changes in mood, sleep, or appetite
- Avoiding school or friends
- Asking for money unexpectedly, or signs of financial stress

These signs don't automatically mean sextortion is occurring, but they're worth a check-in.

Instead of: "What's going on with you?"

→ Try: "I've noticed you seem stressed lately. Is everything okay? You're not in trouble. I'm here if you want to talk."

How Should I Respond?

Finding out that your child is experiencing sextortion can be upsetting. Before deciding what to do next, give your child a chance to tell you what happened.

→ Try to:

- Stay calm.
- Thank your child for telling you.
- Listen before jumping into solutions or asking lots of questions.
- Reassure them that they are not alone and that you will work through the situation together.

→ Avoid:

- Blaming or shaming your child, even unintentionally (for example, "Why would you send that?")
- Taking away devices immediately without first having a conversation, this may make it harder for your child to come to you in the future.
- Jumping into problem-solving before hearing your child out.

A supportive response can help your child feel heard and make it easier to figure out what to do next together. Keeping the conversation going, even when nothing is wrong, can also make it easier for them to come to you when they have a question or need help.

What Happens Next?

Once your child feels safe and heard:

1. Stop contact: Encourage your child to stop communicating with the person and block them across any platforms where contact is taking place.
2. Preserve evidence: Keep screenshots of messages, usernames, and profile links, before blocking, if it's safe to do so.
3. Report it: through the platform where it happened, and to NCMEC's CyberTipline.
4. Request image removal: Take It Down (for minors) or StopNCII.org can help get images removed or blocked from further spread
5. Continue checking in: Check in with your child in the days and weeks that follow, and remind them that they have your support.

Keep talking with your child after the immediate situation is over. Make it clear that questions and conversations about tech, relationships, and online boundaries are always welcome.

Where Can We Go for Help?

- **NCMEC CyberTipline** — report exploitation: [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org)
- **Take It Down** — free service to help remove or prevent spread of intimate images of minors: [Takeltdown.NCMEC.org](https://www.takeltdown.org)
- **StopNCII.org** — image-hash based removal support (for adults 18+, or older teens in some cases)
- **Crisis Text Line** — text "HOME" to 741741
- **Thorn** - text "THORN" to 741741
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** — call or text 988
- School counselors, pediatricians, and trusted family members
- Local law enforcement, when appropriate