Sextortion:
What Parents Should Know

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN®

Sextortion:

A form of child sexual exploitation where children are threatened or blackmailed, most often with the possibility of sharing with the public nude or sexual images of them by a person who demands additional sexual content, sexual activity or money from the child. This crime may happen when a child has shared an image with someone or when someone creates fake explicit content of the child.

How Do the Offenders Gain Access?

The victim often knows their offender, who is typically a current or former romantic partner. In other instances, the offender is someone the victim only knows online. In financial sextortion, the offender often makes initial contact online and victimization happens quickly after that. Additionally, the offender might create explicit content using generative AI and use it to victimize the child.

1 Approach

The offender typically **initiates contact with a victim on a social media platform,** using it to learn about the child's interests, friends, school, family, etc. They then ask the child to **move to a second or third platform** that uses encrypted messaging systems. The sextortion may also be perpetrated by an **ex-romantic partner** who received the image from the victim.

2 Coercive Tactics

Offenders use **various tactics,** such as offering something of value (money, drugs) in exchange for sexual material, pretending to work for a modeling agency, pretending to be younger and appear to have a romantic interest, creating fake sexual material of the child or hacking accounts to steal sexual images.

3 Threats

The offender may use the **threat of spreading the image** to force the victim into staying in or returning to the relationship, acquiring additional sexual content or obtaining money from the child. They may also **threaten to physically assault the child or their family,** or ruin the child's life with false narratives.

What Can You Do?

1 Get Involved

- **Actively participate** in your children's digital lives.
- **Regular check-ins** about online interactions should be the norm.
- Set online and offline behavioral **expectations.**

2 Talk About Sexuality and Relationships

Have **regular discussions** about your family's expectations and values regarding sex and relationships. Discuss the **characteristics of healthy relationships,** such as having and respecting boundaries and practicing consent. Explain that both pressuring someone and being pressured into uncomfortable or unsafe sexual behaviors are **not okay.** Help children understand that they should **never forward sexts** they may receive from others, as limiting the image's spread reduces the risk of it falling into dangerous hands.

3 Empower Your Child

- Provide resources that your child can reach out to, such as **TakeItDown.NCMEC.org** and **CyberTipline.org.**
- Teach your child how to **report** someone.
- **Remind them** that sextortion is a crime, **it is not their fault** and you are here to help them.

Take **It** Down

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For more resources, visit **NCMEC.org/NetSmartz**