

# HOW TO TALK TO YOUTH

## ABOUT SEXTORTION



**Sextortion involves individuals who coerce youth into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual acts via camera-enabled devices and then blackmail them with the threat of distributing the sexual images/videos if they do not pay money or provide more sexual images/videos.** The use of live-streaming services has increased the vulnerability of youth to this type of exploitation because youth can be recorded without their knowledge and then blackmailed with the threat of distributing the recorded content.



**If your child is being blackmailed or extorted online, immediately call your local law enforcement agency.**

### Why teens are vulnerable

Teens' brains are wired for social interaction and bonding with others. Their need for acceptance and belonging strongly drives their decisions. Puberty increases experimentation, sexual curiosity and sexual arousal. These hallmarks of adolescence increase the vulnerability of teens towards sexual exploitation.

### Risks to teens

Online conversations that may initially appear as friendly banter can easily progress to sexual conversations. Understandably, teens may feel intrigued and flattered by these conversations and continue to engage thinking it's harmless. In other instances, the young person may really believe that they are in a relationship with the person they are communicating with online. Messaging and live-streaming services are commonly introduced for the purpose of receiving non-sexual pictures, but can progress to sending nude or partially nude pictures, and possibly sexually explicit content. This content may later be used to blackmail or extort the teen.

### What you can do

Have conversations with your child about the risks associated with using technology to experiment sexually and the potential risk of blackmail/extortion. Conversations with teens are necessary as:

- Teens will often comply with threats received online in effort to try to manage the situation on their own.
- Situations can escalate quickly and teens may find themselves in over their heads.
- It is often very difficult for them to seek adult assistance as they are embarrassed and terrified that the sexual images/videos will be distributed to people they know.
- Teens require supportive responses from adults to help them manage serious situations they encounter online.
- Teens need practical steps for how to get out of harmful situations and to understand that they can come to adults for help.
- Adults have an obligation to be responsive and supportive when teens make mistakes.

Sign up to receive **Cybertip.ca ALERTS!**

Cybertip.ca Alerts are notifications sent out to inform the public of concerning technology trends and new resources designed to increase children's personal safety. As Canada's national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children, the information reported to Cybertip.ca enables us to identify the online risks children and youth are facing. Recognizing that it can be difficult to keep up with technology, signing up for these alerts provides you with important information to help keep your family safe while online. Visit: [www.cybertip.ca/alerts](http://www.cybertip.ca/alerts)



## How to speak to your teen about this issue

1.

**USE MEDIA STORIES ABOUT THIS ISSUE TO ENGAGE IN A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR TEEN.** For example:

"I was just reading about a 15-year-old being threatened online to send money and if he didn't, sexual pictures of him would be sent to all of his friends. I guess he thought he was talking to a 15-year-old girl and, in fun, exposed himself to her on video chat. A couple days later, the boy got a message from a man who had been pretending to be the 15-year-old girl. The man threatened the boy, telling him he had to pay \$250 within the next two days or the man would send the sexual pictures of the boy to all his friends on Facebook and Instagram. The police got involved and discovered that the man was also blackmailing 20 other youth, some of who had sent money to this guy."

For additional media examples, visit [www.cybertip.ca/extortionexamples](http://www.cybertip.ca/extortionexamples).

2.

**SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE RISKS AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY.**

Talk about options for getting out of difficult situations such as not responding and blocking all contact.

3.

**REASSURE YOUR TEEN THAT IF THEY EVER END UP IN A PROBLEM SITUATION, YOU ARE THERE TO HELP.**

Acknowledge that while this may be a difficult step to take, their safety is your number one priority. Emphasize that it's never too late to come to you for help.

4.

**EXPLAIN WHAT EXTORTION IS AND THAT IT IS ILLEGAL.** Extortion is when, without reasonable justification or excuse and in order to get another person to do something or cause anything to be done, a person:

- threatens another person (through words or actions);
- accuses another person of something; or
- is violent or scares another person through words or actions (such as pushing, yelling, throwing things, breaking things).

5.

**TALK TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT LIVE-STREAMING SERVICES.** Reinforce that:

- What happens while live streaming can be easily recorded – don't be fooled by thinking it is live and therefore "no big deal." The same risks exist for live streaming as sending pictures or videos.
- Unless the other person is known offline, there is no way of verifying who is on the other end.
- Pre-recorded content can be live streamed. For example, an adult could stream a video of a teenage girl, so the youth thinks they are talking to a teenage girl in real-time when that's not actually the case.
- They should trust their instincts, be skeptical and cautious. If the person your teen is live streaming with is not visible (e.g., "I am having problems with my camera today – that is why you aren't seeing me"), that person may be trying to hide their identity.

### Reminders for youth

Steps to take if you are dealing with extortion online:

1. Immediately contact your local law enforcement agency or report to [Cybertip.ca](http://Cybertip.ca).
2. Do not comply with the threat.
3. Stop all forms of communication with the individual (block them from your accounts).
4. Deactivate all accounts used to communicate with the individual.
5. Speak to a safe adult about what is happening.

