



REMEMBER

- Youth often feel embarrassed and think they have to deal with online situations alone. If no one asks, they will probably not initiate the conversation.
- Immature cognitive development, a deep desire to be liked, and an underdeveloped capacity to self-regulate impulsive behaviour can open the door to unanticipated harm. 40% of girls who are involved in sexting say that they do it as a joke and 34% do it to feel sexy.
- If a teen has received a sexual image of a peer who is under the age of 18, they are in possession of child pornography.
- We need to invite young people into the better and truer story about what relationships are about from God's perspective. Young people need to know that they were made to be agents of healing and hope in the lives of others rather than objects to be used and controlled. (Ephesians 2:10)



RECOGNIZE

- Teens tend to pursue confirmation from peers as they navigate their emerging identities. Sharing sexual messages, photos and videos (sexting) is a disturbingly common way of seeking affirmation. 40% of teens have either sent or received a "sext" by the age of 13.
- Over half of teens who receive an online sexual image of a peer share it with more than one person; 61% of teens who have sent nude images felt pressured to do so; 15% of teens who have sent or posted nude/semi-nude images sent them to people they met on the internet. The regret and harm that follow these stats can't be measured.
- 75% of those posting self-generated sexual images ("nudes") on the internet are 11-13 year-olds, with 80% of those being girls. This is known as self-exploitation and is increasing at alarming rates.
- Online sexual exploitation also happens when a predator who may be a peer or a stranger uses manipulation, coercion or blackmail to get a youth to take and share sexual photos/videos of themselves, or to perform sexual acts over a webcam. This is often followed by the threat that the image will be shared, forcing the youth to generate more images for the exploiter. ("*sextortion*")



RESPOND

- **Start the conversation** - Invite them to help you better understand their world - don't simply dump information on them. Situations can escalate quickly but if the conversation has already begun, it may be easier for them to ask for help.
 - **Ask them what they know.** "Tell me about sexting and people your age? What do you know about online sexual exploitation or sex-tortion?"
 - **Talk about red flags.** Love bombing (excessive attention/adoration/flattery when the relationship is just forming), being pursued online by an interested stranger, repeated pressuring, threats to withdraw affection if sexual requests aren't met, promises of gifts ... If they were making a list to help protect their friends, what red flags would they add?
- **Develop a measuring stick.** Healthy and unhealthy relationships look different. Especially if the youth has been exposed to porn, they may hold harmful expectations of what is ok in a relationship.
 - **Practice responses.** Thinking in advance about a reply can be incredibly helpful. Remind the youth to never comply with threats - even if they fear humiliation - because it will just get worse. Instead they can contact you or needhelpnow.ca to help them figure out what to do next.
 - **Unmask the plan.** Youth hear that since webcams are live streamed and photos/videos will disappear in seconds from certain apps there's no lasting image therefore no risk. Exploiters simply take a screenshot or video, grabbing the image to do with what they choose.
 - **Follow up.** If they have been part of a self/peer exploitation incident watch carefully for harassment from peers and despair afterward. This can be a dangerous time for a youth and they need to be reminded that they are more than this one story.



RESOURCES

- www.needhelpnow.ca - support and clear and specific instructions on things such as how to remove images online or how to help a youth in crisis.
- evolvreatment.com/blog/talk-internet-obsessed-teen-sex/ - tips for starting and continuing important conversations about sexual behaviour.
- cybertip.ca - Canada's national tip line for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children with info to help you better understand the breadth of the issue.