



PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE GUIDE



The Hard Truth

Child sex trafficking is the continuum of sexual violence against children in America. At its simplest, child sex trafficking is the commercial sexual exploitation of a minor, including child pornography.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), sex trafficking is a \$99 billion industry globally, and traffickers in America can make \$250,000 annually selling a child.

In 2016, Health and Human Services (HHS) estimated that 300,000 American children were being sold for commercial sex in the United States, but less than 3,000 (or 1 percent) were ever identified as survivors of sex trafficking.

You can be part of the solution to eradicate child sex trafficking in America by protecting yourself, your children, and your community.

The following document provides you with some simple ways to strengthen your child's sense of self and helps you address hard issues in an age-appropriate manner.



My Body and Safe Touch

Most child sexual abuse and child trafficking cases involve someone the child trusts. Sexual predators establish a trust relationship with a child long before they start to abuse them.

Topics

- Teach your child anatomically correct terms for their body parts. Make sure they understand that their “private parts” are meant just for them.
- Use the bathing suit example to explain safe and unsafe touching. Remind your child that this includes other children, not just adults.
- At this age, a child is going to learn more from what you are doing than a conversation. Don’t just tell them boundaries, show them boundaries. For instance, when and when it isn’t appropriate to climb into someone’s lap.

Activity

- Build a list of five people who they can trust and talk to if they feel uncomfortable. Sexual predators often tell the child they cannot confide in their parents, so make sure your child knows other people they can talk with.

AGES 6 TO 9



Boundaries and Consent

The majority of child sex trafficking survivors experience child sexual abuse between the ages of 6 and 9 years old. Children who experience sexual abuse often struggle with boundaries, emotional outbursts, and disconnecting from their environment. Here are a few ways to strengthen your child's understanding of boundaries and consent.

Topics

- Children should choose who they allow into their personal space. Your child should not be required to hug individuals, but they can respectfully shake someone's hand instead.
- Teach your child to ask permission before moving into someone's personal space. Emphasize that they need to respect another child when they do not want to be touched.
- Encourage open dialogue and emotional expressions when your child feels uncomfortable. Remind them that it's OK to follow their instincts.
- Address unsafe secrets versus fun surprises, so your child understands when they need to ask for help.

Activities

- Define their *safety network* with three to five people they can go to whenever they're in trouble. List those people's names and phone numbers on the refrigerator or in a place where they can access them in an emergency.

- Write different types of secrets on pieces of paper. Have your child draw them out of a hat, ask them if it's an unsafe secret or fun surprise, and then discuss why.
- Have your child stand in a power stance and practice saying "no" or "I do not like that." This not only helps protect them from sexual abuse, but also from bullying.
- Have an age-appropriate "sex talk" when your child starts to ask questions.

AGES 10 TO 13



Open Communication

The average age of entry into the commercial sex market is 12 years old. From the ages of 10 to 13, kids go through a lot of changes, so parents need to keep the lines of communication open and have those hard conversations to keep their kids safe.

Topics

- Have an open, honest conversation with your child about sex and reiterate the importance of consent. A full "sex talk" should be addressed by age 10 because most children are starting to be exposed to it through social media, TV, or their friends.
- Talk frankly about the dangers in sharing nude or sexually explicit photos of themselves.
- Discuss how sexual predators might approach them on social media, at the mall, or even at school.
- Consider the dangers of pornography and how your child should respond when they see something that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Activities

- Invite your child to add three to five numbers of people they can call in an emergency.
- Create and discuss a device policy with your child and then sign it together.
- Figure out where your pre-teen is most comfortable opening up to you (e.g., on a walk, driving to school) and carve out intentional time with your child. Let them talk while you listen.

AGES 14 TO 18



Sense of Self

When your child reaches high school, they are navigating the challenges of sex, consent, pornography, and life in the digital age. Now, it's important to help them strengthen their sense of self before they graduate high school. You want to empower them to make the best choices for themselves.

Topics

- Help your child understand the importance of trust. Gradually remove restrictions on their devices so they can learn to be responsible for their actions.
- Encourage your child to define their inner voice. When we know who we are and what we stand for, we are better prepared to exceed our own expectations and thrive.

Activities

- Download eBodyGuard to your teen's phone. It is the only app that is voice activated, has GPS location, and can record evidence that is admissible in court.
- Talk to your child about their motives for doing different activities. Ask them the following questions:
 - How frequently are you saying "yes" to things that are of little interest to you or things that you really don't want to do?
 - How often are you saying "no" to things that distract you from achieving your goals or keep you comfortable instead of challenging you to grow?
 - Are you surrounding yourself with peers, teammates, and friends who support you in doing your best or those who may be supporting you in playing small?
 - Are your choices based on what is best for you or on what others may think of you?

SOCIAL MEDIA APPS



We live in a wonderful digital age where information, games, and communication with family and friends is at our fingertips. However, that also means that we can allow traffickers and predators to come into our home without ever entering our front door. There is an ever-increasing trend of traffickers grooming kids online through social media apps and gaming chat rooms.

Monitoring your child's devices becomes complex since dozens of new apps are introduced daily, and the "popular" app among our kids and their peers changes frequently. Additionally, many youths have real and fake accounts (e.g., real: RINSTA and fake: FINSTA) in the same app where the child develops two personas and allows the parent to follow the one with more appropriate content.

For these reasons, it's important to set expectations with your kids about app safety, while also deploying what we have found to be the best internet safety tools available. Here are some conversation topics and next steps to follow.

Topics

- The dangers of meeting people online who may be predators.
- Safe and unsafe information to share with digital friends.
- How sexting can lead to sextortion (see page 9).
- What does your Instagram say about you?

Activities

- Restrict app downloads. Set expectations with your child that new apps can be downloaded once you have discussed the pros and cons and decide usage limitations together.
- "Friend" or "follow" your child's social media accounts (e.g., RINSTA and FINSTA).
- Link your child's device to your App Store account or register for the app through your email, so you'll be notified when an app is downloaded along with other updates.
- Set boundaries for what personal information is shared online.
- Download [Bark](#) to your child's devices to monitor their app usage and content.

INTERNET USAGE



The internet is a great tool. It can also be a scary and unsafe place for those who do not know or have boundaries. A foundation of protecting your kids against traffickers today involves setting healthy boundaries in digital spaces; therefore, it is wise to create an action plan with your kids to promote safer interactions online, healthy internet and device habits, and mental well-being.

You can help your child determine standards of internet usage by walking through the following questions together.

- Describe when and where throughout the day you typically use a computer or phone to access websites or social media apps (e.g., at home, during school hours, on the way to school).
- Where are internet-enabled devices you use (computers, laptops, tablets, gaming consoles, electronic books) located (e.g., home, school, etc.)?
- What types of websites or apps are you allowed to/should you access both in and outside of the home?
- What are responsible ways you can use social media (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, etc.)?
- What restrictions can we agree on for how you access the Internet/apps on your phone?
- Can a cell phone be used to access the internet at all times? If so, what restrictions are on this?

Activities

- Download and sign the Internet Safety Agreement.

SEXTING AND SEXTORTION



Today most kids have constant access to a camera or phone. These aren't bad things. They allow us to stay connected. However, connectivity can also cause us to think some things are OK because they're in a digital space and not "in person." Because of this, it's important to talk to your kids about what kinds of pictures they should and shouldn't take or share.

About 21 percent of teenage girls and 18 percent of teen boys have sent or posted nude or semi-nude images of themselves, according to a survey from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Sexting, or sending and receiving nude or partially nude photos, is woven into our culture and our kids are facing it more than we know. It is important that we help them understand the possible consequences when a picture is sent to one person but can end up passed around a school or friend group. Those consequences can have a lasting impact that include bullying, humiliation, expulsion from school, or even a felony for production and distribution of child pornography or sextortion.

Sextortion can look many ways, but at its core, it is the threat to expose sexual images in order to force someone to do something. Threats come from intimate partners or online strangers attempting to harass, embarrass, and control victims. One in four victims were threatened before the age of 13 and two of three victims were threatened before the age of 16. It's critical that we help our kids understand the risks of sexting that can lead to vulnerabilities and sextortion. Here are some topics to discuss with your kids. Remember, it's important to problem solve with your child and provide a way for escape if they find themselves in a compromising situation.

Topic

- How your child could be vulnerable to sextortion.
- Appropriate and inappropriate images to share.
- Questions to consider before sending a picture.
 - Is this something I would do face to face??
 - Would I be OK with this photo being posted in my school?
 - Would I want someone to ask me for the same thing?
- Plan action steps your child can take if they're in an uncomfortable situation (Helpful tip: Establish a safety network of people whom they can ask for help).

