

[Sexting and sextortion:]

What is it and how to deal with it

For youth aged 16-17 years old

Thinking about sex and exploring your sexuality is a normal, healthy part of growing up. But you need to be careful about your choices and who you decide to trust, because it can have unexpected consequences and it may even make you a target of people who want to take advantage of you.



[What is sexting?]

Sexting is creating, sending or sharing intimate or sexual messages, images or videos with friends, people you know or even strangers online or through a connected device. It could be sending naked pictures of yourself or others, sharing a video of someone naked or having sex, or sending a text describing sexual acts.

[What is sextortion?]

Simply put, sextortion is blackmail. It's when someone threatens to send a sexual image or video of you to friends, family or other people if you don't pay them or provide more sexual content.

[How can it impact you or your friends?]

Sharing naked images may seem harmless at the time. But, in the wrong hands, they can end up hurting you or other people in different ways:

- It can make you a target of people who want to force or pressure you into sexual situations you don't want to be in
- It can be very upsetting when they are shown to or commented on by other people
- It can affect the way people see you or act around you, and how you see the world
- It can damage your mental health and self-esteem
- It can have a negative impact on your future education, career and other opportunities
- In many cases it is against the law to share sexual materials



[What can you do?]

You cannot control what other people do, so it is best to avoid the situation:

- Understand what a healthy relationship looks like – loving, respectful and caring, not manipulative, intimidating or pressuring
- Don't give in to pressure to share intimate materials – it is always okay to say no
- Know that whatever you share may not stay private
- Be careful who you trust – consider how you would feel if they shared your images with their friends or yours
- If you get sent sexual materials, don't forward them to others – you may hurt someone else and you may be breaking the law

If you are worried about images you've sent or are being sextorted, you can:

- Immediately block and stop all communication
- Refuse to give in to threats – do not send more naked pictures or pay them money
- Keep the correspondence to show those who will help you
- Ask for help from parents, teachers, or another safe adult
- Report it to Cybertip.ca or the police
- Get help removing pictures from the internet at NeedHelpNow.ca



[#StopCyberbullying]

Learn more at Canada.ca/cyberbullying



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