Sextortion - What Parents Need to Know

Sextortion is when someone threatens to share your explicit videos or photos if you don't give them what they want - either pay them, give them more explicit images or meet in person. Sextortion is a serious crime and is potentially life-threatening issue for teens.

What can parents do to prevent sextortion?

- Keep the phones out of your kids' bedrooms after 9pm
- Regularly spot check your child's phone for DM's (direct messages) with strangers and explicit photos or videos
- Talk to your teen about sextortion and how it happens
- Make sure you tell you teen there is NOTHING they could do that would make you love them less. There's no mistake that you won't be willing and able to help them recover from.

What can kids do to prevent sextortion?

- Don't take your phone into your bedroom after 9pm
- Never respond to a stranger DMing you. Block and delete strangers.
- Be skeptical about strangers -just because they have a profile photo of a cute teenage girl doesn't mean that's who they actually are.
- Be suspicious if they ask you to move from one social media platform to another (for example, moving from Instagram chat to Discord for video).
- Never turn on your camera for strangers
- Keep your social media accounts private
- Keep your GPS and location off on your phone
- If sextortion has already happened to you, please tell a safe adult and report the crime

What can parents do if sextortion has already happened?

- Let your teen know they're not alone.
- Let your child know they were the victim of a serious crime. The coercion of a child by an adult to produce what is considered Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) carries heavy penalties, which can include up to life sentences for the offender.
- Contact the FBI to report the crime. Call 1-800-CALL-FBI or contact your local FBI field office (contact information can be found at www.fbi.gov), the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at www.ic3.gov, or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (1-800-the-lost or Cybertipline.org).
- Don't delete any photos or conversations until the FBI has reviewed them (even though your teen is embarrassed and wants to delete the evidence immediately)

The Center for Online Safety has a mission: To keep children safe online. We equip schools with systems to prevent cyberbullying, strengthen communications and educate students in digital citizenship.