

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

1. Take small steps.

The younger you start having these conversations, bit by bit, you normalize the topic and prevent overwhelming your child.

2. Keep it simple.

Clear and short messages work best for children. Choose a time and place where you and your child can speak openly, speak to them while doing an activity together, or even at the dinner table.

3. Be age-appropriate.

Use age-appropriate information and examples. As they grow, update the content to fit their evolving needs and internet use.

4. Be curious!

Show an interest in your child's online life and ask questions: *What do you like to do online? Who are you connecting with? Did you ever experience anything inappropriate online? Do you know what to do if it happens again?*

5. Use the news.

Real-life events are relatable for children and help them understand the importance of the issue. Use a news story or something happening at their school, and ask if they heard about it, if they know someone who's been through this, and how it was handled. Reinforce the importance of reporting inappropriate behaviours.

6. Be honest.

Kids are savvy! Stick to the facts and use "what-if..." scenarios to engage them in dialogue. Don't lecture. Feeling that their voice matters is crucial for kids to learn how to advocate for themselves.

7. Be supportive.

Remind your child that they can always come to you if they feel scared, uncomfortable or unsafe, or if they made a mistake. It can happen to anyone.

8. Be patient.

Some kids are resistant to engage at first. Keep trying!

9. Stay educated.

Technology is changing rapidly. However, the red flags of online exploitation are always relevant. Talk to your child about what to look out for so that they can recognize that something is off on any app or platform.

10. Create a safety plan.

Discuss with your child what they should do if they don't feel safe online, including how to block and report suspicious activity, and who are the trusted adults they can come to.

Remember: you don't need to know every app, game or social media to have this conversation. The most important thing is to keep the lines of communication open so that your child can come to you if they have questions or need help.