ONLINE SAFETY *Parent Resource Kit*

Childhelp
FOUNDED IN 1959 BY SARA O' MEARA + YVONNE FEDDERSON
PREVENTION EDUCATION

Dear parent/caregiver,

Youth are online more than ever before. They do research, keep in touch with friends, watch videos, and create content – all great uses of available apps. Yet, online dangers are growing as kids are targeted online and exploited in various ways.

The most effective way to help kids stay safe is to start the conversation early about the dangers they may encounter – not to scare them, but to encourage them to talk to you. We're providing this **Online Safety Parent Resource Kit** to use as a starting point for conversations that will help keep kids safe online and offline.

DON'T THINK OF SAFETY AS A FEATURE, THINK OF IT AS A FOUNDATION.

Childhelp's Prevention Education program for adults, **Connect to Protect Kids**, teaches safety through the **3 Keys to Protecting Children – Commitment, Action, and Connection**. This is a great framework to help you better protect your kids.

1. **Commitment**
   - Seek to better understand the risks and learn more about online safety.
   - Commit to partnering with kids to help keep them safe online.
   - Commit to ongoing conversations, not a one-and-done conversation.
2. **Action**
   - Approach conversations with curiosity and ask questions.
   - Educate and empower kids about the importance of privacy settings and not sharing personal information.
   - Stay involved and active, and partner with kids to learn what they are doing online.
3. **Connection**
   - Recognize that prevention starts with connection, not surveillance.
   - Use safety and monitoring tools to help, but know the best tool is your relationship and having ongoing open and honest conversations.
   - Ensure kids know they can come to you for help and support no matter what.

RESOURCES INCLUDED IN THIS KIT:

- **Online Safety Conversation Guide:** use this guide to help with conversations about online safety.
- **Online Safety Agreement:** Print and review this agreement with your child to foster shared responsibility for online safety.
- **Online Safety Reminders Mini Poster:** Print and hang this in a visible location to foster ongoing conversations.
- **Online Safety Resources for Adults and Youth:** Use these resources to learn more and find support.
- **Responding to Online Harm:** Should you ever need it, this guide can help with next steps for dealing with harmful online situations.
- **Staying Safe from Online Harm:** Access this free training to learn more about online exploitation and use the included lessons for youth to help educate your child (childhelp.org/subs-online-harm).

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ONLINE SAFETY CONVERSATION GUIDE

Youth today live as much online as they do offline. Unfortunately, any time a child is online, there is a risk of exposure to unsafe content or people. It's important to talk with kids (without scaring them) about potential risks, teach them to recognize unsafe situations by how their online interactions compare to healthy relationships, and make sure they know they can talk to you or another safe adult about anything – without feeling blame or embarrassment.

Start the conversation with your kids and teens about online safety with this conversation guide based on Childhelp's Prevention Education Program, ***Speak Up Be Safe***, and our supplemental module, ***Staying Safe from Online Harm***.

Use the **3 Keys to Personal Safety** to frame conversations with kids and teach them the following key points:

1. You have the RIGHT to be safe.

- You have the right to be safe online.
- By being aware and recognizing risks online, you can help prevent harm.
- You can be an active partner with your safe adults to help you stay safe online.
- Online abuse is never your fault, and if anything happens, help is available.
- Together we can handle any situation. You are not alone.
- It's never too late to get help.

2. You have POWER.

- You can recognize safe vs. unsafe people and situations, and take action to stay safe and get help.
- You can learn to recognize signs (red flags) of grooming, such as flattery, gifts, secrecy, and isolation.
- You have the power to choose healthy relationships (mutual trust and respect, kindness/empathy, safe behaviors, no secrets) over unhealthy/unsafe ones (manipulation, demands, inconsistent behavior).
- Respect, peer support, and talking to safe adults are powerful safety tools.
- Trust your instincts and know you can change your mind if someone's behavior seems unsafe or something feels off.

3. You can SPEAK UP.

- You can speak up through actions – say no, leave a site or chat, end the conversation, and block the person.
- You have a safety network of adults, peers, and resources to connect with for help.
- You can tell a safe adult, report unsafe behavior, and/or connect with a helpline.
- Speaking up also means supporting a friend or peer if they experience any harmful or unsafe behaviors online.

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ONLINE SAFETY CONVERSATION GUIDE

Use the following information and talking points based on the **3 KEYS to Personal Safety** to help you talk to children and teens. Look for everyday opportunities to discuss online safety. Having open and ongoing conversations will normalize the topic and foster a sense of shared responsibility for safety between you and your child.

MAIN IDEA	TALKING POINTS
Key 1: You have the RIGHT to be safe.	
Begin with Curiosity • If possible, start the conversation early, before kids begin using online apps. • Normalize the topic and ask about their experiences, inviting them to talk first. • Ensure they know they can talk to you or another safe adult, no matter what. • You'll often hear people say teach kids to talk to trusted adults. But in many cases, the adults who harm children are people the child knows and trusts. Teach kids to identify and talk to SAFE ADULTS instead. Safe adults are defined by their actions, not by who they are or how they look.	• "I've been learning more about how people sometimes misuse the internet. I'm curious—what kind of stuff do you and your friends see online?" • "Technology changes so fast. What apps are popular with your friends or people you know?" • "A lot of people have experienced uncomfortable situations online. It's super common, so I wanted to make sure you know what to watch for and how to respond if anyone ever makes you feel uncomfortable or pressures you online. I want you to know you can always talk to me or another safe adult to help you."
Share Simple, Concrete Red Flags • Keep the focus on warning signs in someone's behavior, not scary scenarios. • Suggest that they compare behaviors to benchmarks of a healthy relationship: mutual empowerment, safety, trust, respect, and boundaries. • Use youth-friendly examples, like those in the talking points.	"Has anyone ever… • asked you (or a friend) to move to a private chat?" • asked you to keep a secret ("don't tell your parents")?" • "love-bombed" or complimented you intensely?" • asked for pics, personal info, or to meet in person?" • said they're your age but won't video chat or talk on the phone?"

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ONLINE SAFETY CONVERSATION GUIDE

MAIN IDEA	TALKING POINTS
Key 2: You have POWER.	
Always Ask for Their Input • Children and teens love sharing what they know. • Asking for their input and thoughts reinforces their competence, opens dialogue, and empowers them. And you'll learn a lot.	• "You know way more about online apps and gaming than I do. What are some things you think will help you stay safer online?" or "What advice would YOU give to a younger kid about staying safe online?" • "If you were giving advice to someone you know about handling pressure online, what would you tell them?"
Risk Is Not Always from Strangers or Adults • Kids often think "online exploitation = creepy older adult." Research shows that a significant portion of online exploitation involves acquaintances and friends.	• "Sometimes peers pressure each other into stuff online—like asking for photos, sharing screenshots, posting personal info, or urging someone to talk or chat privately. This behavior may start out harmless, but it can escalate into unsafe or abusive behavior." • "You know, you have the power to decide who you interact with online. You can say no, end the conversation, block a person, and leave a chat or site." • "What would be some signs to watch out for that might indicate an account is fake or that someone isn't who they say they are?"

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ONLINE SAFETY CONVERSATION GUIDE

MAIN IDEA	TALKING POINTS
Key 3: You can SPEAK UP.	
Empower Them with Choices • Kids and teens may shut down if all they hear is, "You can't do this." Instead, give them information, tools, and choices. • Make it clear they can come to you without fear of blame, and that there IS HELP available. This is the key factor that helps youth report problems. • Ensure they know they can also talk to another safe adult if needed, and brainstorm together who those safe adults would be. • Let them know there are websites and other resources that can help with online safety concerns. Provide the *Resources for Youth* handout available in this kit so they have information about where to turn for help.	• "If something feels off, trust that instinct—it's usually right. You can block someone, talk to me, and report it." • "If anything ever makes you uncomfortable—even if you're not sure why—I'm here to help. You won't be in trouble. I just want you to be safe." • "If something ever happens to you or a friend online, you are not alone and help is available. You can talk to me or another safe adult, like your school counselor or a teacher, or you can call or text a helpline. There are also websites that can help. I have a list I can share with you so you'll have it if you ever need it." • "There are services that can help stop the spread of personal images, provide resources, and offer support."
Keep the Conversations Going • Keep conversations short and ongoing; continued check-ins are more effective than one long "big talk." • Use the questions in the "Talking Points" column to begin conversations. • Depending on your child's response to questions, engage in further discussion about what their response was, what might be helpful in a similar situation in the future, and reinforce talking to safe adults with any questions/concerns.	• "What apps are popular with your friends right now?" • "Have you seen anything weird or concerning online lately?" • "Have your friends shared that they've seen any concerning or unsafe behaviors online?" • "Have you witnessed any drama online or in group chats lately?" • "Before you post or share about someone else online, do you ask permission? Do friends ask for your permission?"

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ONLINE SAFETY AGREEMENT

It's important for youth and parents/caregivers/safe adults to know the risks of online harm and exploitation and how to stay safe. By signing this online safety agreement, we promise to do the following to help promote online safety.

YOUTH: I will partner with my parent, caregiver, or safe adult to recognize risks, make safe choices, and protect my online safety and wellbeing, and support my peers to do the same.

I WILL...

- ☐ Keep my information private and secure; review my privacy settings; use security features like two-factor authentication; not share personal information like my full name, phone number, address, school name, location, or age.
- ☐ Treat others with respect and kindness.
- ☐ Be mindful of suspicious online behaviors or messages, including someone asking me for personal information, to share photos, to go to another app or site, or becoming too close too fast.
- ☐ Remember that not everyone online is who they say they are, and always interact with care.
- ☐ Limit my screen time to have a healthy balance between online and offline activities, and avoid visiting sites that are meant for adults.
- ☐ Block and report anyone who makes me feel unsafe or uncomfortable or anyone displaying threatening, harassing, or bullying behavior.
- ☐ Identify safe adults to go to if I am unsure about a situation, want to meet online friends in person or on a different app, or experience any online harm or exploitation.
- ☐ Stay informed about new tools, trends, risks, and safety practices so I can help keep myself and my friends safe online.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

PARENTS/CAREGIVERS: I promise to stay connected and engaged to help my child stay safe online.

I WILL...

- ☐ Think of online safety not as a "feature" to turn on, but as a "foundation" of my relationship with my child.
- ☐ Stay informed about new tools, trends, risks, and safety practices to better protect my child.
- ☐ Model healthy digital citizenship, communication, and life balance.
- ☐ Educate my child about online risks and safety strategies and empower them to make safe and healthy choices about their online behavior.
- ☐ Stay connected through ongoing and open conversations with my child about their online activities.
- ☐ Respond calmly and supportively if my child experiences something unsafe online, even if they break a rule or share something they wish they hadn't.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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ONLINE SAFETY *Reminders*

REMINDERS FOR *Adults*

My **COMMITMENT**:
I will...
- Learn more about online risks and how to help you stay safe while still allowing you to enjoy online activities.
- Respect and empower you to make safe choices online.

My **ACTIONS**:
I will...
- Have open and ongoing conversations with you about your online activities and online risks, ask you questions, and listen to your thoughts and feelings.
- Educate and empower you about online risks and how to stay safe.

My **CONNECTION**:
I will...
- Stay involved and engaged in your activities, both online and offline.
- Always be available so you can come to me for help and support no matter what.

REMINDERS FOR *Youth*

I have the **RIGHT** to be safe.
I will...
- Be aware and proactive to stay safe online.
- Be an active partner with my safe adults to help me recognize risks, report harmful online behaviors, and seek support when needed.

I have **POWER**.
I will...
- Learn to recognize signs of grooming and safe vs. unsafe people and situations, and take action to stay safe.
- Choose healthy relationships over unhealthy/unsafe ones.
- Trust my instincts and change my mind if something feels off or unsafe.

I can **SPEAK UP**.
I will...
- Speak up through my actions – say no, leave a site or chat, end a conversation, or block an unsafe person.
- Stay connected with my safety network of safe adults and peers.
- Tell a safe adult, report unsafe behavior, and/or connect with a helpline when I need help.

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Get Support & Resources:

Childhelp National Hotline
childhelphotline.org
800-422-4453

Make a Report:

CyberTipline
cybertipline.org
800-843-5678

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ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES FOR ADULTS

LEARN MORE:

Part of helping youth stay safe online involves knowing what risks exist and teaching them what to look out for. Here are some resources to help you learn more:

- ***Staying Safe from Online Harm*** is free to use and helps you protect youth (ages 10–15) from sextortion and online exploitation. This resource includes:
  - A self-paced online training for parents and other adults to learn about the issues and risks
  - Scripted lessons and engaging presentations that can help you educate and empower youth
  - Supplemental materials and resources

  Access this resource at: childhelp.org/subs-online-harm
- **Know2Protect** (dhs.gov/know2protect) is a Department of Homeland Security site that educates and empowers children, teens, parents, adults and policymakers to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse, explains how to report online enticement and victimization, and offers resources for victims, survivors, and supporters.
- **Thorn for Parents** (parents.thorn.org) offers information and a variety of prevention and support resources for caregivers.
- **Stop It Now!** (stopitnow.org) is a nonprofit organization committed to preventing child sexual abuse by supporting parents/caregivers and by strengthening organizational policies and prevention efforts.

GET HELP AND SUPPORT:

If your child experiences online harm or exploitation, it's important to know there is help available to navigate next steps. You can reach out to:

- **Childhelp National Hotline** (childhelphotline.org) is a 24/7 confidential hotline staffed by trained crisis counselors who can answer questions, provide local resources, and help you make a report.
- **CyberTipline** (report.cybertip.org), from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, takes reports of online exploitation. NCMEC also offers a service called **Take It Down** (takeitdown.ncmec.org), which helps remove explicit photos and videos of underage individuals from online platforms. You can also call NCMEC at 1-800-843-5678 or email gethelp@ncmec.org.
- **Internet Crimes Against Children** (ICAC) Task Force Program (icactaskforce.org) is a national network of over 5,400 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies dedicated to investigating and prosecuting internet crimes against children.

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ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

LEARN MORE:

Part of staying safe online involves knowing what risks exist and what to look out for. Here are some resources to help you learn more:

- **NOFILTR** (nofiltr.org), powered by Thorn, provides resources and advice to safely navigate sexual exploitation and risky encounters online.
- **NetSmartz** (missingkids.org/netsmartz) is an online safety platform by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. They provide videos and activities to help kids stay safe online.
- **K2P Kids** (dhs.gov/know2protect/k2p-kids-teens) from the Department of Homeland Security is a site for kids and teens ages 10 and up to learn more about online safety, including staying safe when gaming and using messaging apps and social media.
- **TalkLife** (talklife.com) is a peer-to-peer support app that shows you are not alone. Users can post messages about what they're struggling with, and others can respond.
- **Amaze "Sextortion: Online Coercion and Blackmail"** (amaze.org/video/sextortion-online-coercion-and-blackmail) is an online resource for kids ages 10 to 14 that provides honest, accurate information about sextortion. Videos on other topics related to health, wellbeing, and personal safety are also available.

GET HELP AND SUPPORT:

When online harm or exploitation happens, it's NEVER your fault. It's important to seek help. You can reach out to these resources:

- **Childhelp National Hotline** (childhelphotline.org) is a 24/7 confidential hotline staffed by trained crisis counselors who can answer questions, provide local resources, and help you make a report.
- **Stop Sextortion** (stopsextortion.com) from Thorn provides kids and teens with helpful steps to stay safe, ideas for peer support, and information youth can share with parents.

Building **STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR** *safer* **FUTURES**

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RESPONDING TO ONLINE HARM

STEP 1 · BE A SAFE ADULT

When online harm happens, it can be hard for youth to speak up, so if they do come to you about something that has happened online, it's important to respond appropriately. If a young person discloses that they or someone they know are being harmed or exploited online, follow these guidelines. **IF SOMEONE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 911.**

LISTEN calmly and avoid reacting with shock. Be empathetic and let the youth know you are a safe adult that will help and support them.

REASSURE them that online abuse or exploitation is NOT their fault. Tell them that asking for help takes courage and you are proud of them for coming to you.

SUPPORT them with next steps. Explain the importance of reporting and help them make a report and seek professional help.

If your child is the victim of sextortion, remind them they are not to blame. Do not pay, send additional images, or comply with demands. Preserve evidence without downloading or sharing any sexual images of a minor, including your child. Report the incident to law enforcement and the CyberTipline and seek professional guidance and support.

STEP 2 · MAKE A REPORT

Online abuse or exploitation is often a crime. It is vital that a report is made, both to support the youth who has been harmed and prevent the perpetrator from harming others. Report to:

CyberTipline (cybertipline.org) is a national online abuse/exploitation reporting system hosted by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). You can call 1-800-THE-LOST or make a report online. Reports are reviewed and submitted to appropriate law enforcement agencies for investigation and follow-up. They can also provide helpful resources and support.

DHS How to Report Guidelines (dhs.gov/know2protect/how-to-report) provides information about reporting, including the Know2Protect Tipline at 833-591-KNOW (5669).

Take It Down (takeitdown.ncmec.org) is a free service provided by NCMEC that can help get explicit online photos removed. Reports can be made anonymously.

Internet Crime Complaint Center (ic3.gov) is the nation's central hub for reporting cybercrime, hosted by the FBI.

STEP 3 · GET SUPPORT

When online harm happens, it's important to seek professional support. Help youth reach out to:

Childhelp National Hotline (childhelphotline.org) is a 24/7 confidential hotline staffed by trained crisis counselors who can answer questions, provide local resources, and help you make a report.

Thorn (thorn.org) provides resources to help youth and caregivers safely navigate online harm and exploitation. Thorn for Parents (parents.thorn.org) offers resources and information for caregivers and NOFILTR by Thorn (nofiltr.org) provides a risk assessment and resources for youth.

Know2Protect (dhs.gov/know2protect) is a Department of Homeland Security site that educates and empowers children, teens, parents, adults and policymakers to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse, explains how to report online enticement and victimization, and offers resources for victims, survivors, and supporters.

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