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EDUCATION GUIDE

Holding Candid Conversations on Child Exploitation

EMPOWERING YOUTH
to Recognize Sexual Exploitation



Education for Middle, High School, College-aged Youth & Adults

Walking Wise Education Center

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Parents & Caregivers

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents always treat a child’s disclosure of sexual abuse seriously and contact one of the following: the child’s pediatrician, a local child advocacy center, a child protection service agency, or the police. For more information, visit [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.HealthyChildren.org). In addition, if there are any suspicions of child sex trafficking, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or Rescue America at 833-599-FREE (3733). For more information, visit [HumanTraffickingHotline.org](https://www.HumanTraffickingHotline.org) or [RescueAmerica.ngo](https://www.RescueAmerica.ngo).

LESSON #5



LESSON PLAN #5

The Sextortion Scheme

Objective: To provide ideas for creating a deeper conversation that examines how groomers of sextortion often use technology to manipulate and control victims.

I. Emotional Readiness Acknowledgment

- A. **Educator:** To ensure readiness for exploitation prevention education, refer to the *Walking Wise Implementation Tools* and the U.S. Department of Education's guide, *Human Trafficking in America's Schools (ed.gov)*. Also, please review the classroom teaching tips to prepare for educating students about exploitation.
- B. **Parents:** To prepare for educating your children about exploitation, review the home teaching tips.

II. Animated Video & Classroom PowerPoint Presentation

- A. **Educator:** Consider completing the adult learning module on this topic for additional background. Download and adapt the classroom presentation to fit your students' age and school policies.
- B. **Parents:** Review the vocabulary words (below) with your child, then watch the animated video. After discussing the lesson, consider having your child complete the student survey in this lesson plan.

Vocabulary

1. **Sexting:** To send, receive, or share sexual messages, photos, or videos, typically using cell phones.
2. **Extortion:** To obtain money, property, or services from someone through threats of physical harm, property damage, or other forms of pressure.
3. **Sextortion:** To threaten to expose someone's sexual content (or private images), such as photos or videos, if they do not cooperate with demands.
4. **Grooming:** To build trust to take advantage of someone later.
5. **Blackmail:** To threaten to reveal private, sensitive, or embarrassing information to make someone do something.
6. **Circulating:** To cause something to pass from place to place or person to person.
7. **Pornography (Porn):** Pictures, videos, or media that show sexual behavior to create excitement – often displaying unrealistic or harmful behavior.
8. **Predator:** Someone who harms, abuses, or takes advantage of others for personal gain or profit.
9. **Manipulation:** To influence or control someone's behavior or decisions in a false or unfair way, often for personal gain.
10. **Intimidation:** To influence or control another person's actions or behavior by causing fear.
11. **Coercion:** To pressure someone into doing something they don't want to do, often using threats.
12. **Catfishing:** To create a fake online identity to trick someone, typically for personal gain, manipulation, or to cause harm.
13. **Warning Sign:** A clue or signal that something may be unsafe, risky, or not right.

III. Post Video Discussion

1. How can a young person become a victim of sextortion?

Sextortion can happen when a predator gains a young person's trust and then uses threats to control them.

- **Online:** Sextortion often begins online through social media, games, or messaging apps, where predators often pretend to be someone else.
- **In Person:** In some cases, the predator is someone the victim already knows, such as a peer or acquaintance. Sextortion can start through sexting, when a private image is shared and later used to make threats.
- **AI Generated:** Predators also use artificial intelligence (AI) or editing tools to create fake images that look real. They can claim that a fake image is real to embarrass or scare someone.

2. Why do sextortionists use threats, and what do they demand?

Sextortionists use threats and blackmail to create fear and pressure victims to act quickly without thinking. They often demand money, gift cards, more private images, or video chats. In some cases, even if the victim does what they ask, the threats may continue, or the images may still be shared.

3. What types of apps or online platforms do sextortionists use to find victims?

Both sextortionists and traffickers often use popular online platforms where young people communicate and connect. This includes social media, online games, messaging apps, photo and video-sharing platforms, live-streaming services, and dating apps. They use these spaces to start conversations, build trust, and seek out vulnerable people who may respond.

4. What type of online post can increase risk?

Predators often use online posts to start conversations and gain trust:

- **Personal Information:** Posts that share details like age, school, location, daily activities, or family details.
- **Seeking Attention:** Posts that ask for compliments or include private or suggestive images.
- **Emotional Sharing:** Posts that reveal feelings like loneliness, sadness, or low self-esteem.
- **Family or Personal Problems:** Posts about conflict at home or personal struggles that may invite someone to step in and “help.”

5. How do predators begin talking to a person they have targeted?

Predators often start with one image to begin making threats, but sometimes they have no images at all.

- **Fake Identity:** They use a fake profile, often pretending to be the same age and having a romantic interest in the people they target.
- **False Claims:** They may say they have a private image, even when they do not, as a scare tactic.
- **Edited or AI Images:** They may create fake images using editing tools or AI to make it look like they have a real image of the targeted person.
- **Hacking Claims:** They may say they got private images by hacking a device or account to create fear, even if the claim is not true.
- **Live Recording:** They may ask for a video chat and secretly record anything shared.

6. What are the laws about sending sexual images?

Laws can be different depending on where you live, but there are some important rules to know:

- **Requesting Images:** It is against the law for someone to ask a minor (under 18) to send their private or sexual images.
- **Share Images:** It is illegal to send, receive, or share sexual images of anyone under 18. This includes forwarding images of someone under 18 to other people.
- **If a Young Person Is Targeted:** Even though it is against the law to send sexual images of children, young people who are pressured or tricked are always protected. The person making the threats is breaking laws written to protect children. The [FBI](#) assures minors, “You are not the one who is breaking the law.”

7. How can young people reduce their risk of being approached by online predators?

Young people can lower their risk by building safe online habits:

- **Limit Screen Time & Use Privacy Settings:** Spend less time online and use privacy settings to control who can contact you.
- **Think Before You Post:** Avoid sharing personal information like your location, school, or daily activities.
- **Connect with People You Know:** Only accept messages or friend requests from people you know in real life.
- **Watch for Unknown Contacts:** Do not respond to messages from people you don’t know. Block and report them if needed.

8. How can a young person end communication with a sextortionist?

- **Tell a Trusted Adult:** Ask for help from a parent, teacher, coach, school nurse, or another trusted adult.
- **Do Not Send Anything:** Do not send money, images, or respond to demands.
- **Stop Contact:** Block the person on all apps and platforms to end communication.
- **Save Evidence:** Do not delete messages, images, or accounts. This information can help adults and law enforcement investigate the matter.

9. How should students respond if a private image is being shared at school?

- **Tell a Trusted Adult:** Inform a parent, guardian, or trusted family member for support.
- **Report to School Staff:** Tell a teacher, counselor, or school administrator so they can take action. School officials can help stop the sharing of images by enforcing school policies.
- **Involve Law Enforcement (if needed):** If laws are broken, adults may contact law enforcement to investigate.
- **Get Emotional Support:** Talk to a counselor or trusted adult to help cope with stress and difficult emotions.

10. How can young people and parents stop a private image from spreading online?

It can be hard to completely stop an image from spreading, but acting quickly can help limit it:

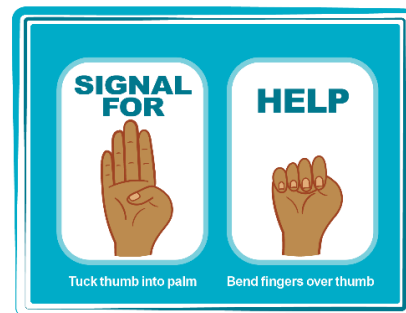
- **Make a Report with Law Enforcement:** Report blackmail, threats, or harassment to local police.
- **Use “Take It Down” (NCMEC):** Report images shared before age 18 at [Report.CyberTip.org](https://www.reportcybertip.org) to help remove them from online platforms.
- **Report to Authorities:** Report suspicious activity or predators to appropriate agencies, such as the FBI at tips.fbi.gov or Homeland Security at 1-866-347-2423.
- **Report to the Platform:** Report the image directly on the app or website where it was shared to help stop further spreading.
- **Act Quickly:** The sooner the incident is reported, the better the chances of limiting how far the image spreads.

IV. How to Ask for Help

There are safe ways to get help if you or someone you know is being threatened or harmed.

Options:

- If you are in immediate danger, dial 911.
- If the sexual predator is NOT a family member, tell a parent or guardian.
If the sexual predator IS a family member, tell a trustworthy adult.
- If you are a student, tell a trustworthy teacher, coach, school nurse, social worker, officer, principal, or guidance counselor.
- To gain internet access for help, use a computer at school or a public library.
- If you are in public, consider hand-motioning the “Signal for Help” to alert bystanders to call the police.



24-Hour Hotlines for HELP

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cybercrime.gov) or 1-800-THE-LOST (843-5678)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) [IC3.gov](https://www.ic3.gov), or contact your local office

National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888 or Text “BEFREE”: 233733

Homeland Security [1-877-4-HIS-TIP](https://www.his-tip.gov)

App or Internet Platform Select the “Report” menu option

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline [800-273-TALK \(8255\)](https://www.800-273-talk.org) or [TEXT 988](https://www.800-273-text.org)

VIDEO SCRIPT #5

The Sextortion Scheme of Child Sex Trafficking

Note: The bolded words are defined in the video vocabulary list under section II.

Ever think **extortion** only happens to wealthy people on TV? The evil villain uses humiliating photos to blackmail the successful politician for money.

Cell phones make kids vulnerable to a similar crime called “**sextortion**.” Kids are pressured to send naked photos of themselves. Then they’re threatened to comply with ruthless demands to prevent humiliation.

Sextortion can be committed by anyone, including exes, cruel classmates, and dangerous online predators. They often threaten to reveal photos to family and friends – as **blackmail**.

Sexting photos can seem harmless, especially to kids who have been exposed to online **porn**. But – it’s illegal to text or email nude pictures of kids, even self-produced images. Law enforcement classifies these photos as child **pornography**.

Social media apps create a dangerous entryway for sexting and sextortion.

Here’s how electronic devices create the perfect storm for sextortion:

- First, young people can have a natural tendency to trust and share.
- Second, the hidden sex traffickers ooze with kind, reassuring, and inquisitive replies.

Posting photos and comments is like dropping breadcrumbs for **manipulative** strangers to follow.

Over time, posts reveal your age and activities, where you live and attend school, and the stability of your relationships with family and friends.

Child sex traffickers have a knack for recognizing lonely, unhappy, or self-doubting kids. They gather the breadcrumbs shared online, then cleverly engage them in conversations. This is called the “**grooming**” process.”

“Nobody gets me...”

“I’m so bored...”

“I’m so ugly...”

“Really, you think I’m pretty?”

“I understand you.”

“Is your family ignoring you again?”

“You’re the prettiest girl I know.”

“Yeah, and you have a hot body.”

Once the request for sexual photos begins, the pressure doesn’t let up until kids give in. These private photos are prone to being **circulated** as a weapon against them. The demands for more photos, money, or in-person meetups are enforced with threats against kids and their families. After all, social media posts can give “sextortionists” a roadmap to our homes.

What sextortionists don’t want kids to know is... They’re a victim of **coercion**! But the law is on our side!

If this is your experience, reach out to a trustworthy adult.

Dial 911 if you’re in immediate danger.

Or hand-motion the ‘Signal for Help’ to alert bystanders.

Otherwise, contact a 24-hour hotline for help.



STUDENT SURVEY #5

The Sextortion Scheme

*Please mark an **X** in the box next to the best answer:*

1. How does sextortion often begin?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A. A stranger sends money first. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B. Someone often builds trust first and then makes threats. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C. A friend sends a friend request. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D. Someone sets up privacy settings. |

2. How should someone respond if they are experiencing sextortion?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A. Delete the messages right away. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B. Only tell a classmate for emotional support. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C. Tell a trustworthy adult to get help reporting the situation. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D. Send money to make the demand stop. |

3. Why do sextortionists use threats?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A. They are unhappy people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B. They were not taught how to be polite. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C. They want to create fear and pressure for quick decisions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D. They don't understand how to be a good friend. |

4. What helps reduce the risk of sextortion?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A. Using privacy settings and being careful online. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B. Only talking to strangers while online. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C. Sharing locations to your school or home online. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D. Posting personal details online. |

STUDENT SURVEY #5

The Sextortion Scheme

The survey can be administered either after the lesson discussion or as a pre- and post-survey before students watch the video.

ANSWER KEY

KEY #5

- 1) B
- 2) C
- 3) C
- 4) A

RESOURCES #5

The Sextortion Scheme

Visit us online at [WalkingWise.com](https://www.walkingwise.com).

Other Resource Links – Websites accessed 8/7/2025

THORN – *Trends in Financial Sextortion: An investigation of sextortion reports in NCMEC CyberTipline data.*
https://info.thorn.org/hubfs/Research/Thorn_TrendsInFinancialSextortion_June2024.pdf

THORN: Thorn.org – *Introducing THORN for Parents*
<https://www.thorn.org/digital-resources-parents/>

PureVPN.com – *18 Most Dangerous Social Media Apps in 2023*
<https://www.purevpn.com/blog/dangerous-social-media-apps/>

THORN – *LGBTQ+ Youth Perspectives: How LGBTQ+ youth are navigating exploration and risks of sexual exploitation online.* https://info.thorn.org/hubfs/Research/Thorn_LGBTQ+YouthPerspectives_June2023_FNL.pdf

Chatham House: OurInternet.org – *One in Three: Internet Governance and Children’s Rights*
https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/no22_2.pdf

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): fbi.gov – *How We Can Help You*
<https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/safety-resources/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes/sextortion>

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fbi.gov – *FBI Launches Sextortion Awareness Campaign in Schools*
<https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/stop-sextortion-youth-face-risk-online-090319>

Department of Homeland Security: ice.gov/Sextortion – *HSI, federal partners issue national public safety alert on...*
<https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/hsi-federal-partners-issue-national-public-safety-alert-sextortion-schemes>

The Exodus Road – TheExodusRoad.com: *Kids Sexting: Child Porn, Exploitation, and Human Trafficking*
<https://theexodusroad.com/kids-sexting-child-porn-exploitation-and-human-trafficking/>

LOVE146.org: *Raising children alongside technology* – free webinar & resources
<https://love146.org/online-safety/>

SafeKids.com: Online Safety Quiz
<http://www.safekids.com/quiz/>

Cornell University: EvidenceBasedLiving.com – *Does video surveillance deter crime?*
<https://evidencebasedliving.human.cornell.edu/2014/10/03/does-video-surveillance-deter-crime/>

Broken link? Please notify us at support@WalkingWise.com. Thank you!