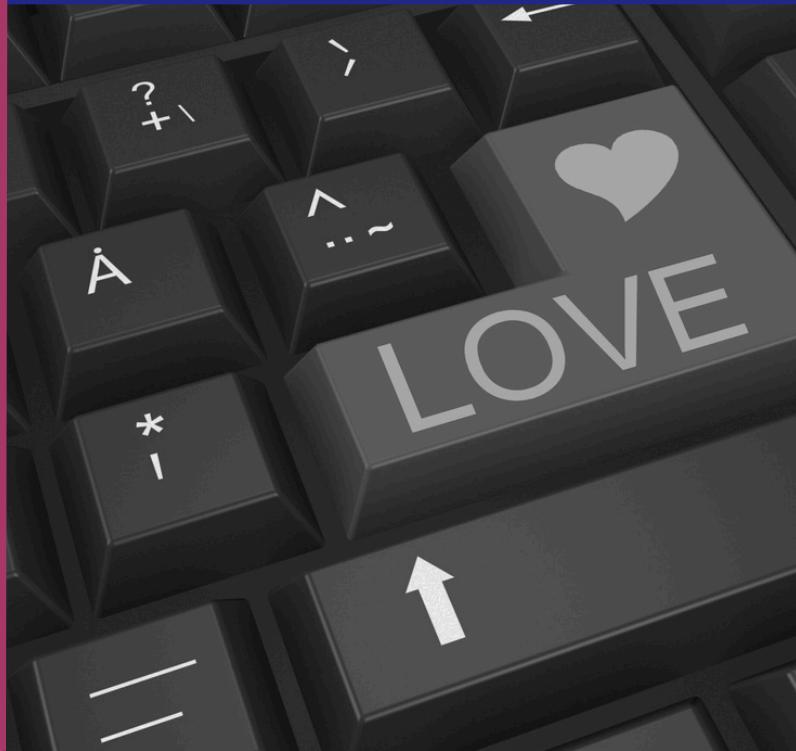




2025
**CONSCIOUS
BODIES:
E-NTIMACY**

handbook



2025

CONSCIOUS BODIES: E-NTIMACY

handbook

BY ERASMUS+ TRAINING
COURSE PARTICIPANTS



Agenzia Italiana
per la Gioventù

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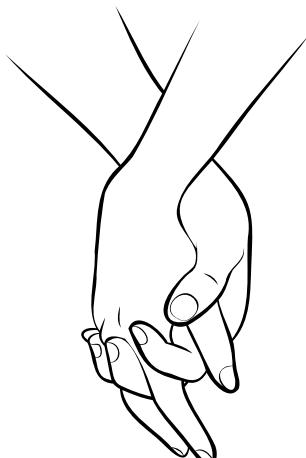
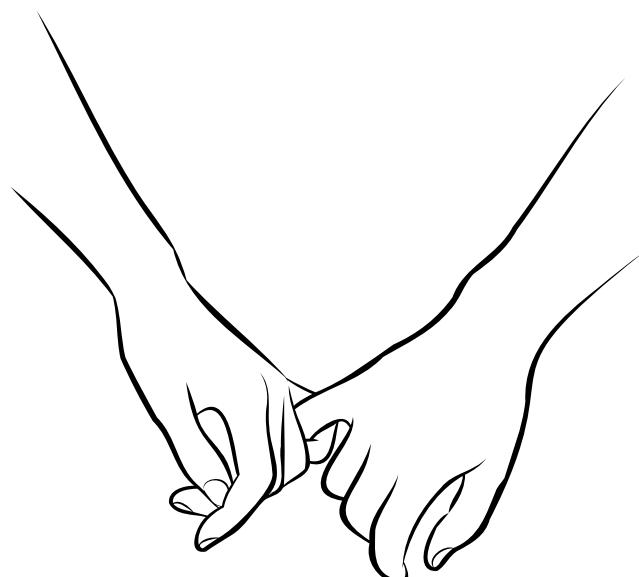


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Foreword

This handbook is the result of a shared process among youth workers and educators who chose to look directly at a subject often left vague, awkward, or ignored—how young people experience intimacy online. Digital spaces are not a separate reality; for many, they are the reality where relationships begin, boundaries are tested, and identity takes shape. As youth workers, ignoring this would mean missing the point of our work entirely.

The pages that follow are not a set of instructions or final answers. They are a working document one shaped by dialogue, practice, and experimentation across borders. Over several months, youth workers from six organizations Mosaica (Italy), Kultur und Art (Germany), Caminho (Portugal), Pangaea Youth Network (Denmark), Club for UNESCO of Piraeus and Islands (Greece), and Uno (Spain) contributed their time, questions, and expertise to this process. Their motivation was not driven by obligation, but by the belief that youth work can be a space where uncomfortable conversations happen with care, and where digital realities are met with the same attention we give to offline life.

The handbook reflects a deeper premise: that youth workers are not only observers of change, but active participants in shaping how it unfolds. Their tools are not abstract they are time, trust, patience, and the ability to listen. When these tools are used well, they help young people navigate complexity with a sense of agency rather than confusion. And when youth workers bring their knowledge into the community, the impact extends far beyond workshops or activities. It shifts attitudes. It raises expectations. It makes space for new kinds of safety, responsibility, and connection.

If there's a guiding idea here, it's this: digital intimacy is not a threat or a novelty—it's part of the human experience now. Supporting young people in exploring it consciously is not optional. It's part of what youth work must become.

This handbook is one contribution to that shift. We hope it's useful. We also hope it's only the beginning.

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Conscious bodies: E- ntimacy project presentation

Overview

"Conscious Bodies: E-ntimacy" is a transnational initiative aimed at strengthening the capacity of youth workers to address the sensitive and often overlooked challenges young people face in online intimate relationships. As digital platforms increasingly shape how relationships begin, evolve, and sometimes end, the project equips professionals with the tools and understanding needed to encourage healthier, safer digital connections. The project empowers youth workers to better support young people in navigating online interactions with empathy, awareness, and confidence by exploring the digital dimensions of intimacy, such as sexting, image-sharing, online consent, AI-enhanced risks and more.



Conscious bodies: E-intimacy project presentation

Objectives

- Create a safe and open environment: Establish a secure and transparent atmosphere by encouraging open communication among young workers about the difficulties, requirements, and worries related to intimate relationships that arise online. We aim to help build mutual trust and understanding.
- Deconstruct harmful beliefs: Analyze critically and address damaging stories and assumptions about romantic and sexual relationships that are widely held by young people and youth workers. This will encourage people to adopt safer, healthier habits.
- Guide youth workers on online safety: Creation of useful resources and long-term non-formal educational tools, such as online handbook and videoguide, to inform and educate young people and youth workers about:
 - Identifying identity theft, personal data breaches, and online fraud
 - Awareness of the dangers and repercussions of intimate internet exposure (such as sexting, image sharing, revenge porn, and artificial intelligence)
 - Putting preventative measures into place and being prepared to respond when faced with cyber threats
- Raise awareness of risks of intimate exposure online: Equip youth workers with the skills to educate young people about the potential legal, social, and emotional risks tied to inappropriate or unsafe online behavior in intimate contexts, such as exploitation or cyberbullying.

Conscious bodies: E-intimacy project presentation

Expected results and impact

Main outputs

- A digital handbook offering educational content and guidelines for youth workers addressing digital intimacy
- A video guide to complement the handbook with visual learning tools

Multiplier events

Each partner will organize a local event to showcase the project results, present the handbook and video guide, and engage the community through discussions and lectures.

Long-term impact

- A new culture of safer online behavior among young people
- Strengthened competencies for youth workers across Europe
- A growing network of trained professionals and peer educators promoting digital well-being and responsible intimacy practices

Through these actions, the project aims to build knowledge and a wider ripple effect, as participants return to their communities with a deeper understanding and commitment to support conscious, respectful, and safe online relationships.

Partners

ITALY - Mosaica is an association with extensive backgrounds in youth education, communication, project development, and nonprofit work. Founded to support equality, social inclusion, and non-formal education, Mosaica creates safe, transformative spaces for dialogue, creativity, and participation. Locally, Mosaica runs workshops on facilitation, gender equality, anti-discrimination, and emotional intelligence, which supports young people in Rome to connect, grow, and inspire change. Mosaica collaborates with institutions and aims to empower youth to become active, inclusive citizens on both a local and international level.



DENMARK - Pangaea Youth Network connects young people across cultures through educational exchanges, intercultural experiences, and Erasmus+/Nordplus opportunities. They promote lifelong learning, global cooperation, and youth empowerment. Their programs focus on building skills, encouraging diversity, and promoting community-driven innovation. With activities ranging from local workshops to international mobility, Pangaea supports youth in becoming active, aware, and inclusive citizens equipped to shape a sustainable future.

PORTUGAL - Caminho Coop is a nonprofit social enterprise founded in 2022 to address youth challenges through public policy, non-formal education, and social innovation. The team brings experience from local to international levels, focusing on capacity building for youth workers, educators, and policymakers. They specialize in Municipal Youth Plans, Youth Councils, and gamified learning on themes like sustainability, entrepreneurship, and digital skills. Caminho also develops and manages Erasmus+ and civic engagement projects, providing young people with tools to reflect, create, and lead change in their communities.



Partners

SPAIN - Asociación Uno is a non-profit organization based in Valencia, focused on lifelong learning and the development of socio-emotional intelligence. Founded in 2021, Uno works on four main areas: social inclusion, gender equality, sustainability, and emotional development. The association supports marginalized communities through non-formal education, cultural and sports events, and community-building activities. Uno has experience in many Erasmus+ projects and is also involved in Horizon Europe proposals. Its team specializes in project management, non-formal education design, training, and dissemination.



GREECE - Club for UNESCO for Piraeus and Islands is a non-profit organization founded in 2004. It promotes UNESCO's values, focusing on education, human rights, cultural heritage, and sustainable development. The Club works with youth, migrants, and vulnerable groups through non-formal education, arts, intercultural dialogue, and EU-funded projects. It regularly organizes local and international activities, including workshops, trainings, and awareness campaigns, with the aim of empowering young people and fostering social inclusion.

GERMANY - Kultur & Art Initiative, founded in 2002, promotes intercultural dialogue, inclusion, and active citizenship through media and non-formal education. Based in Detmold, They organize the International Short Film Festival Detmold, an accessible and inclusive cultural event reaching thousands annually. Their youth work includes intercultural workshops, creative media projects, and active involvement in EU programs like Erasmus+. They focus on giving voice to diverse communities, enabling young people to engage in cultural production and social change.



Introduction

Exploring the world of digital intimacy

Welcome to a guide designed to help you understand and navigate the complex, evolving world of digital intimacy. In an era where our lives are increasingly intertwined with technology, our relationships, connections, and expressions of self are often shaped by digital interactions. This handbook aims to shed light on what it means to be intimate in a digital space, exploring both the exciting possibilities and the significant challenges that come with it.

Understanding digital intimacy

Digital intimacy refers to how individuals connect, share, and express closeness and vulnerability through digital platforms and technologies. It's about how we form, maintain, and experience personal relationships online, ranging from casual messaging to deeply personal exchanges. This can contain everything from sharing thoughts and feelings in private chats to exchanging explicit content with a partner. As our reliance on digital communication grows, so does the complexity of these intimate connections.



Introduction

Exploring the world of digital intimacy

Risks and opportunities in the digital sphere

The digital sphere presents a double-edged sword when it comes to intimacy. On one hand, it offers unprecedented opportunities:

- Enhanced connection: Digital tools can help maintain long-distance relationships, stimulate connection for those with social anxieties, and provide platforms for self-expression.
- Sexual exploration: For many adults, e-intimacy allows for safe and private sexual exploration and communication with partners.
- Community building: Digital spaces can help individuals find communities and support networks based on shared interests or identities, including those related to sexuality.

On the other hand, the digital realm also harbors significant risks:

- Privacy violations: The ease with which digital content can be copied, shared, and distributed makes privacy a constant concern.
- Non-consensual sharing: A major risk, as highlighted by "revenge porn," is the sharing of intimate images or videos without consent, leading to severe emotional and reputational harm.
- Exploitation and abuse: Digital anonymity can facilitate various forms of exploitation, including coercion, blackmail, and online grooming.
- Misinformation and deception: The digital environment can make it challenging to ascertain genuine intentions or identities, leading to potential deception. The following chapters will guide you through these challenges and opportunities, providing you with the knowledge and tools to guide digital intimacy safely and responsibly

Revenge porn



Revenge porn

What is revenge porn?

Revenge porn is the non-consensual distribution of intimate, sexually explicit images or videos of another person. It's about sharing private content without the subject's permission, with malicious intent.

Revenge porn, also known as non-consensual pornography or image-based sexual abuse, is the sharing of private, sexually explicit images or videos of another person without their consent and with the purpose of causing embarrassment, distress, humiliation, or other harm. The images may have been obtained during a consensual relationship or through other means like hacking. While often perpetrated by ex-partners seeking "revenge," the motive isn't always revenge, and the term "revenge porn" can be misleading. It is a criminal offense in many jurisdictions and can apply to both online and offline sharing.

Revenge porn examples

1. Public awareness campaign video

"No Excuses." - Ali Ryan on the sharing of intimate images without consent.

Ali Ryan, Founder and CEO of Goss Media, adds her voice to the public awareness campaign highlighting the issue of sharing intimate images without consent.

This short piece, part of the "No Excuses" campaign, highlights the damage caused by sharing intimate images without consent and outlines the recent legislative changes in Ireland to protect victims and prosecute perpetrators.

2. UK helpline for victims video

This video explains how the UK helpline for victims of revenge porn works. It has both sign language and subtitles. The Revenge Porn Helpline supports adults over the age of 18, who have been affected by intimate image abuse. This video gives an overview of the Helpline and how it can support.

Revenge porn

Articles

Jasmine article

Jasmine is a 28 year old from the UK who, as many others, never imagined she could be a victim of revenge porn. However, out of nowhere a friend reached out to her to alert her that they had found compromising images of jasmine in a variety of websites. Jasmin proceeds to describe the emotional rollercoaster that it is to be involved in such a traumatic experience, going from paranoid states and obsessions and also the constant fear and shame. It's also important to note that Jasmine refers that she reported the incident but the individual/abuser only got a verbal warning.

Zara and Giorgia article

The following article contains multiple perspectives on the trauma and effects from being a victim of revenge porn. Along the article we can relate to Zara McDermott and Georgia Harrison's cases and stories as well as their advice for avoiding more cases like theirs and how to better protect victims of this kind of abuse.

DL article

In the following article we can read a successful outcome from a legal battle of a victim of revenge porn in Texas. The woman is referred by the initials DL and she filed a harassment lawsuit in 2022, after her ex boyfriend posted intimate pictures of her online. Throughout the reading we can analyse the victim of the abuser and the manipulation that was being used as a way of maintaining the victim attached to the abuser by feeling powerless and alone. The article analyses the outcome of the legal battle and how even though there is a win, there is still a trauma left to be dealt with, but the success of the case helps to restore the dignity and the good name of a victim of this kind of abuse.



Revenge porn

Why revenge porn matters?

Revenge porn matters because it constitutes a severe violation of privacy, dignity, and personal safety. It can lead to immense emotional distress, psychological trauma, reputational damage, social ostracization, and even threats to physical safety for the victim. It's a form of sexual abuse and cyberbullying, with long-lasting consequences for the victim's well-being and future prospects. It's also illegal.

How to recognize revenge porn red flags?

You recognize revenge porn when you see intimate images or videos of someone being shared publicly (or semi-publicly) without their apparent consent. This can be evident if the person expresses distress, if the content is posted by an ex-partner during a contentious breakup, or if the context of the sharing suggests a malicious intent rather than consensual sharing.

Red flags that may indicate a risk of image-based abuse:

● Pressure to send intimate images/videos:

- A partner or acquaintance constantly asks for or demands nude or sexually explicit photos/videos, even if you express discomfort.
- They use emotional manipulation, guilt trips, or threats to coerce you into sending images.
- They pressure you to send more explicit images after you've already sent some.

● Controlling or manipulative behavior:

- Your partner or acquaintance exhibits a pattern of controlling behavior in the relationship (e.g., isolating you from friends/family, monitoring your phone/social media, dictating your choices).
- They use intimate images as a tool for control, threatening to share them if you don't comply with their demands.
- They become angry or aggressive if you refuse to send images or try to set boundaries.

Revenge porn

- Threats to share images:

- Explicitly threatening to share intimate images or videos with friends, family, colleagues, or on public platforms if you break up with them, don't do what they want, or for any other reason.
- Making veiled threats or "jokes" about sharing images.

- Taking images without consent:

- Taking photos or videos of you naked or in intimate situations without your knowledge or explicit consent.
- Recording you during private activities (e.g., showering, using the toilet) without your permission.

- Breach of trust regarding previously shared images:

- If you have previously shared intimate images consensually within a private context (e.g., with a partner), and they hint at or directly threaten to share those images publicly.

- Obsessive or possessive behavior:

- Exhibiting extreme jealousy or possessiveness, especially in response to your interactions with others.
- Stalking or harassing you, online or offline.

- Demanding identifying features in images:

- Insisting that your face, tattoos, birthmarks, or other identifiable features be visible in the images you send. This makes it easier for them to link the images to you if they are shared without consent.
- Moving too fast sexually in a new relationship/online interaction:
- Someone you've just met online or are just starting a relationship with tries to escalate to sexually explicit conversations or image sharing very quickly.
- They send unsolicited explicit images of themselves and then demand you reciprocate.

If you recognize any of these red flags, it's crucial to prioritize your safety. It's not your fault if someone threatens or shares intimate images without your consent. There are resources available to help you.

Revenge porn

How to prevent revenge porn?

- Be cautious with sharing: Think carefully before sending or allowing yourself to be photographed in sexually explicit ways, even with trusted partners. Once an image is out there, you lose control over it.
- Use privacy settings: Ensure your devices and online accounts have strong privacy settings.
- Discuss consent: If you do create intimate content with a partner, have an explicit conversation about what can and cannot be done with those images, emphasizing that they are for private use only.
- Know your rights: Understand the laws in your jurisdiction regarding non-consensual image sharing.

How to prevent revenge porn? (from a youth worker's perspective)

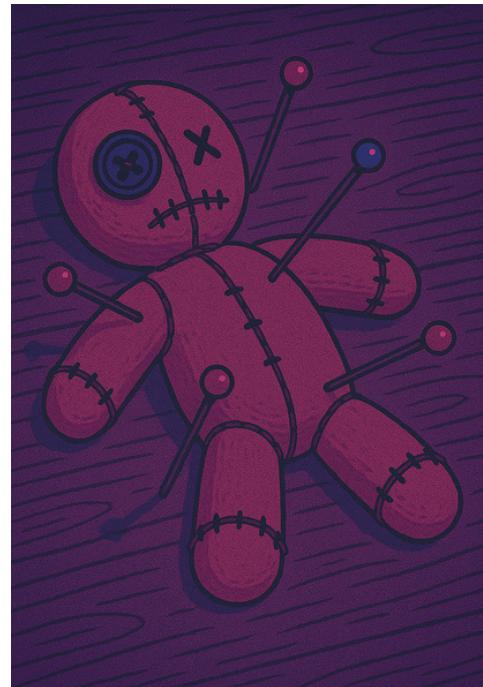
- Consent education and clear boundaries: This is fundamental. It's not just about "not sharing," but about understanding that people have the right to say "no" to anything, at any time, and that trust doesn't override consent. Focus on the importance of openly discussing what's comfortable or uncomfortable before any type of intimate sharing.
- Digital literacy and critical thinking: Help young people understand how digital platforms work, who has access to what, and the long-term consequences of sharing online. Promote critical thinking about social pressures and online expectations regarding intimacy.
- Building self-esteem and resilience: Many cases of sexting or sharing intimate images happen due to peer pressure, insecurity, or a desire for validation. Working on young people's self-esteem can help them make more informed decisions and resist pressures. Resilience is crucial for dealing with the consequences if something goes wrong.

Revenge porn

- Support channels and trust: Create an environment where young people feel safe to talk about these topics without judgment. Make it clear that there are trusted adults (parents, teachers, youth workers, etc.) and support services (helplines, psychologists) they can turn to if they need help or if something happens.
- Understanding legal and emotional consequences: It's not just a "mistake"; it can have serious legal consequences (defamation, privacy offenses, etc.) and devastating emotional consequences (anxiety, depression, stigma). It's important for young people to understand the gravity of the impact it can have on their lives and the lives of others.

What to do when revenge porn happens?

- Do NOT blame yourself: The perpetrator is solely responsible for this crime.
- Preserve evidence: Take screenshots, save URLs, and document all instances of the images being shared.
- Report to platforms: Contact the websites, social media platforms, or apps where the images are posted and request their removal.
- Seek legal assistance: Consult a lawyer to understand your legal options, including cease and desist letters, civil lawsuits, and criminal charges against the perpetrator.
- Contact law enforcement: File a police report. This is a criminal offense in many places.
- Seek support: Reach out to trusted friends, family, or professional support organizations (e.g., victim support groups, therapists) to help you cope with the emotional impact.



Revenge porn

What to do when revenge porn happens? (from a youth worker's perspective)

When a young person experiences sexting or revenge porn, it's a really tough situation, and as a youth worker, your role is crucial in providing support and guiding them through it. Here's how to approach it:

- Validate their feelings and ensure safety first: The absolute priority is the young person's well-being. Start by telling them, "This is not your fault. What happened to you is wrong, and you deserve support." Create a safe space for them to express their emotions without judgment. Ask them if they feel safe, and if there are any immediate risks.
- Empower them to take control (where possible): While they might feel completely out of control, help them identify what they can control. This includes:
 1. Collecting evidence safely: Guide them on how to take screenshots, save links, and record dates and times where the images are being shared. Explain why this is important – it helps in reporting and potential legal action. Emphasize that they don't need to look at the images if it's too distressing, but just to capture the proof.
 2. Reporting to platforms: Help them navigate the process of reporting the content to social media platforms, websites, or apps. Show them where the reporting features are and explain that these platforms often have policies against non-consensual images. Offer to do it with them if they're comfortable.

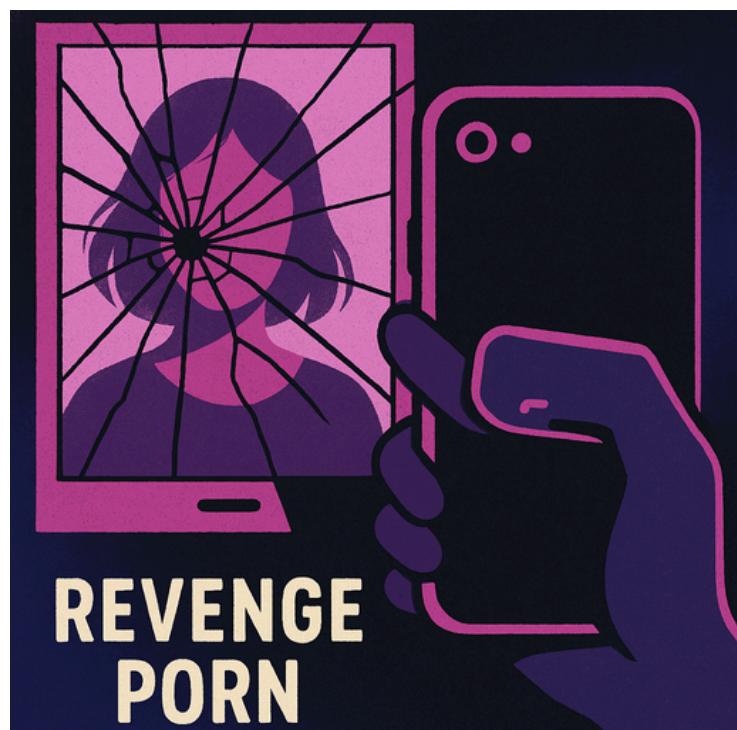


Revenge porn

- Connect them with professional support: You're a key support, but they'll need more specialized help.

1. Legal guidance: Explain that this is a crime and there are legal avenues. Suggest speaking with a lawyer or contacting organizations that offer free legal advice for victims. You can help them find these resources.
2. Law Enforcement: Discuss the option of filing a police report. Explain that this is a serious matter and the police can investigate. Reassure them that their privacy will be respected as much as possible and that the focus is on the perpetrator. Offer to accompany them or help them prepare if they decide to go this route.
3. Emotional and Mental Health Support: Stress the importance of looking after their mental health. Suggest connecting with a therapist, counselor, or a victim support group. Explain that talking to someone who understands can make a huge difference in processing the trauma. You can help them find local services.

- Reinforce that they are not alone: Continuously remind them that many people experience this, and there's a strong network of support available. Encourage them to reach out to trusted friends, family, or other adults in their lives if they feel comfortable.



Sexting



Sexting

What is sexting?

Sexting is the act of sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or videos, primarily between mobile phones or other digital devices. The term is a blend of "sex" and "texting." Sexting can be consensual and a part of romantic or sexual interactions, but it can also involve risks, especially when images are shared without consent or with individuals who are not trustworthy.

Examples

Teen sexting leads to legal consequences

A 14-year-old British boy sent a nude image to a classmate via Snapchat, which was saved and shared. Although not arrested, the incident was recorded as a crime of "making and distributing indecent images of a child," potentially affecting his future employment prospects.



Why sexting matters?

Sexting matters because while it can be a consensual form of intimacy or exploration for adults, it carries significant risks, especially for minors.

- For adults: Risks include the potential for images to be leaked or used as revenge porn if a relationship sours, or the possibility of coercion.
- For minors: It can lead to serious legal consequences (child pornography laws), cyberbullying if images are shared without consent, blackmail, exploitation by predators, and significant emotional distress if content goes viral or falls into the wrong hands. It also raises questions about true consent when dealing with developing brains.

Sexting

How to recognize sexting red flags?

Sexting can be a consensual and healthy part of a relationship, but it carries significant red flags when it becomes non-consensual, pressured, or indicative of unhealthy power dynamics. Here are red flags to watch out for in sexting, similarly to general texting, but with a focus on intimate content:

- Pressure and coercion: Repeatedly asking for explicit content after you've said no: Disregarding your refusal or expressing disappointment/anger when you decline to send images or videos.
- Guilt-tripping or emotional manipulation to get content: "If you loved me, you'd send me a picture," "You're being a tease," or implying your relationship will suffer if you don't comply.
- Threats to end the relationship or withdraw affection: Using the withholding of intimate content as a leverage point.
- Pressuring for more explicit content than you're comfortable with: Starting with milder requests and escalating, pushing your boundaries.
- Sending unsolicited explicit content and demanding reciprocation: Sending their own nude or explicit images without your consent, then demanding you do the same. This can be a form of digital coercion.
- Insisting on specific poses or identifying features: Demanding your face, tattoos, or other identifiable features be clearly visible, which makes it easier to link the images back to you if they are shared.
- Pressuring you to take risks (e.g., in public, with others present): Suggesting or demanding you create content in situations that make you uncomfortable or unsafe.

Sexting

● Lack of respect for boundaries and privacy

- Sharing or threatening to share your explicit content with others: This is a major red flag and often illegal. Any hint of this behavior, even as a "joke," is a serious concern.
- Taking screenshots or saving content without permission: If you've sent something with the understanding it's ephemeral or for their eyes only, and they indicate they've saved it without asking.
- Demanding access to your device or accounts to check your sexting history: A serious invasion of privacy and a sign of controlling behavior.
- Criticizing your body or appearance based on sexts: Making negative or demeaning comments about your body after receiving intimate content.
- Forwarding your explicit content to themselves via another device/account: If they save it on a different phone or email it to themselves without your knowledge, it shows a disregard for your privacy.
- "Joking" about sharing your content: Even if presented as humor, it can be a way to test boundaries or subtly threaten..

Controlling and manipulative behavior:

- Using sexting as a form of control: Withholding affection or attention unless you send explicit content.
- Monitoring your online activity related to explicit content: Checking your social media for any "flirty" behavior or explicit interactions with others.
- Gaslighting about previous sexting agreements: Denying that you had an agreement about keeping content private, or claiming you "consented" to something you didn't.
- Shaming or guilt tripping you for your sexual history or preferences: Using information gained from sexting to shame or manipulate you.
- Obsessive focus on sexting early in the relationship: If the primary or overwhelming focus of communication is pushing for explicit content, rather than genuine connection



Sexting

● General warning signs (magnified in sexting context):

- Your gut feeling: If any aspect of the sexting interaction makes you feel uneasy, pressured, exploited, or unsafe, trust that feeling.
- Feeling like you owe them explicit content: This is a dangerous mindset; you never owe anyone intimate images.
- Isolation: If their focus on sexting makes you withdraw from friends or other activities, or if they discourage you from connecting with others.
- Inconsistent behavior: Being charming and loving, but then demanding and pressuring when it comes to explicit content.

If you encounter any of these red flags, it's critical to prioritize your safety and well-being. Stop sending explicit content, set clear boundaries, and if the behavior persists or escalates, seek support from trusted friends, family, or professional resources. Nonconsensual sharing of intimate images is illegal in many places and there are organizations dedicated to helping victims of image-based abuse.

How to prevent sexting risks?

1. Understand the risks: Be aware that once you send an image, you lose control over it. It can be saved, copied, and forwarded.
2. Think before you send: Consider the potential consequences of sending explicit content. Could this image ever be used against you?
3. Consent is key: Never send explicit content of someone else without their explicit, enthusiastic consent. Never pressure anyone to send content.
4. Privacy settings: Use strong passwords and privacy settings on your devices and accounts.
5. It's important to understand it is a common practice, so if you do it try to do it in the healthiest and safest way. Avoid showing your face or other parts/places/things that are recognizable; Avoid putting yourself in a vulnerable position where you can easily lose control like writing things that would compromise your integrity.

Sexting

6. For parents (regarding minors):

- Open Communication: Talk to your children about sexting, its risks, and legal implications in a non-judgmental way. Do not blame your child. Make them feel validated and understood.
- Set Boundaries: Establish clear rules about phone use and digital interactions. Do not be your child best friend, establish limits and boundaries. Educate playfully but seriously. Open the discussion with the kids, let them have a voice and explain why you said no or why they can't do something.
- Monitor (appropriately): Be aware of what your child is doing online without invading their privacy excessively. Use parental control tools if necessary. But always be honest.

How to prevent sexting risks? (from youth worker's perspective)

- Understand and discuss the real risks: Instead of just focusing on "losing control," it's important to have a deeper conversation about the various ways images can be shared.
 - Once it's sent, it's almost impossible to take back. Help young people understand that even if they trust someone, a phone can be lost, stolen, hacked, or the relationship might end. Images can be saved, copied, and forwarded without their knowledge or consent.
 - Pressure and Blackmail. Discuss how sexting can lead to situations of pressure or blackmail (sextortion), where someone might threaten to share images to get more content or other things.
 - Impact on Reputation and Future. Talk about how an image circulating can affect their reputation at school, with friends, family, and even future job opportunities or university admissions.
- Think before you send (The "Grandparent test") - Encourage young people to pause and think: "Would I be comfortable if this image were seen by my grandparents, my teacher, or a future employer?" If the answer is no, then they shouldn't send it. This is a simple and effective tool to assess the risk.

Sexting

- Consent is ABSOLUTELY key: This is the cornerstone of any conversation about sexting.
 - My body, my rules. Reinforce that each person has the right to decide what they do or don't do with their body and their images. No one should feel pressured or coerced into sending sexual content.
 - Consent is ongoing and revocable. Explain that consent to send an image doesn't mean consent to share it with others. And consent can be withdrawn at any time. If someone changes their mind, the image should be deleted.
 - It's not a game. Make it clear that pressuring someone to send sexual content is unacceptable and can have serious consequences.
- Privacy settings and digital security:
 - Protect your digital space. Help young people set up strong passwords, use privacy settings on all their platforms (social media, messaging apps), and be aware of who has access to their information.
 - Don't share logins. Emphasize the importance of never sharing their login credentials, even with close friends or partners.
- For parents (from a youth worker's perspective -how to support parents):
 - Open, non-judgmental communication is the best prevention." Advise parents to create an environment where children feel safe to talk about sexting, their fears, curiosities, or the pressures they feel. Reinforce that blaming the young person will only make them shut down. It's crucial to validate their feelings and show understanding.
 - Clear, explained, and justified boundaries and rules." Help parents understand that setting rules about phone use and online interactions is essential. Explain the importance of explaining why these rules exist, involving young people in the discussion, so they understand the reasons behind the "no's." It's not about being their "best friend" but about being a guide and a protector.
 - Conscious and transparent monitoring." Guide parents to be aware of their children's online activities, but in a way that respects their growing privacy. If parental control tools are used, it's vital to be honest about their use and purpose, fostering trust instead of secrecy. Emphasize that monitoring should aim for safety, not punishment.

Sexting

What to do when sexting goes wrong?

- Consent is ABSOLUTELY key: This is the cornerstone of any conversation about sexting.
 - My body, my rules. Reinforce that each person has the right to decide what they do or don't do with their body and their images. No one should feel pressured or coerced into sending sexual content.
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Sexting

What to do when sexting goes wrong?

- If you are a minor involved in sexting (or your child is):
 - Do NOT delete: Preserve any evidence, including messages and images.
 - Talk to a trusted adult: For minors, confide in a parent, guardian, teacher, or other trusted adult.
 - Seek help: If images have been shared without consent or if there's any form of exploitation, contact law enforcement immediately. Many organizations specialize in helping young people in these situations.
 - Report to Platforms: If images are shared on social media, report them to the platform.
 - Seek Support: Connect with a counselor or therapist to process any emotional distress.
- If you receive unwanted sexts: Block the sender and report them to the platform if necessary. Do not engage with the content. Do not reply. Report to the authorities.

What to do when sexting goes wrong? (from youth worker's perspective)

- If you are a minor involved in sexting (or your child is):
 - Do NOT delete: Preserve any evidence, including messages and images.
 - Talk to a trusted adult: For minors, confide in a parent, guardian, teacher, or other trusted adult.
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- If you receive unwanted sexts: Block the sender and report them to the platform if necessary. Do not engage with the content. Do not reply. Report to the authorities.

Sexting

When consensual sexting becomes non-consensual

If a young person has sent consensual intimate images that are then shared without their permission (which can quickly cross into revenge porn territory), the approach is similar to dealing with revenge porn directly:

- This is NOT your fault. What happened is wrong. Start by validating their feelings and reiterating that the blame lies entirely with the person who shared the images. This is crucial for their emotional well-being.

Preserve Evidence (Safely!): Guide them on how to take screenshots, save URLs, and document any messages or instances where the images are being shared. Emphasize that they don't need to look at the images if it's too distressing, but this evidence is vital for reporting.

- Report to platforms immediately: Help them understand and navigate the process of reporting the content to social media platforms, websites, or apps where it's posted. Most platforms have strict policies against non-consensual intimate imagery. Offer to sit with them as they do this.
- Seek trusted adult support: Encourage them to confide in another trusted adult – a parent, guardian, school counselor, or another relative. Offer to facilitate this conversation if they're comfortable.
- Explore legal avenues (it's a crime): Explain that sharing images without consent is a crime in many places. Connect them with resources for legal assistance or local law enforcement. Reassure them that the focus will be on the perpetrator, not on them. You can offer to accompany them to file a police report if they choose to.
- Prioritize emotional support: The emotional toll can be immense. Help them find counseling, therapy, or victim support groups. Remind them it's okay to feel overwhelmed and that professional help can make a significant difference.

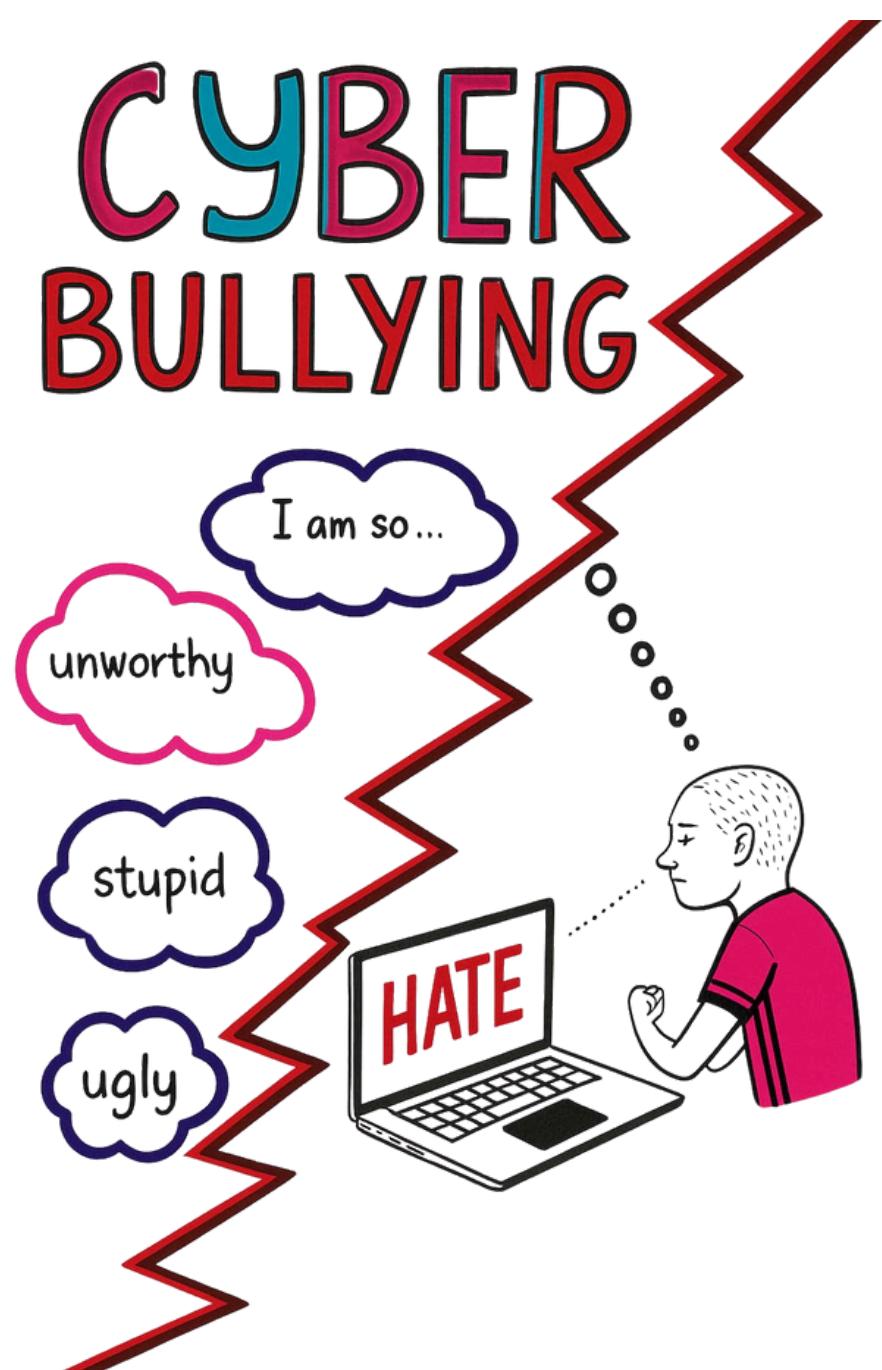
Sexting

If a minor is involved in sexting

Whether it's consensual sexting that might put them at risk, or they're facing pressure, immediate and supportive action is key.

- Do NOT delete anything (yet): Advise them to preserve all evidence, including messages, images, and conversations. Deleting can make it harder to address the situation later.
- Talk to a trusted adult: If they're coming to you, listen without judgment. If they're hesitant to talk to parents, offer to be that trusted adult or help them identify someone else they feel safe confiding in. The goal is to get adults involved who can provide support and guidance.
- Assess for coercion or exploitation: This is a critical step. Ask questions carefully to understand if they were pressured, threatened, or if there's any element of exploitation. If so, contact law enforcement immediately. Organizations specializing in child exploitation can also provide crucial help.
- Address sharing (if it happens): If any images have been shared without their consent, guide them through the steps of reporting to platforms as outlined above.
- Connect with mental health support: Sexting situations, especially those involving pressure or sharing, can cause significant distress. Facilitate access to a counselor or therapist who can help them process their emotions and develop coping strategies.
- If they receive unwanted sexts:
 - Do NOT engage or reply! This is the most important message. Engaging can escalate the situation or encourage the sender.
 - Block the sender immediately.
 - Report to the platform. Most messaging apps and social media platforms have options to report unwanted or inappropriate content and users.
 - Consider reporting to authorities, especially if it's persistent, threatening, or involves a minor sending to another minor.

Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica



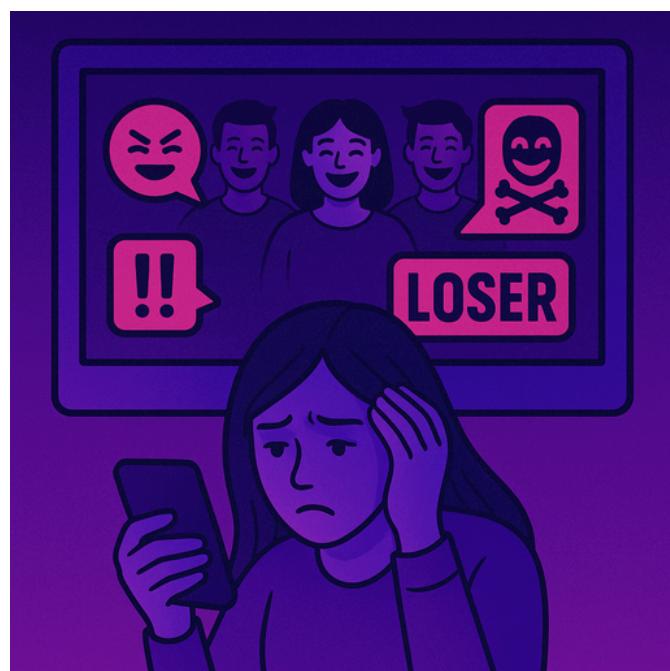
Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on various digital devices and platforms. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.

Cyberbullying involves harmful and aggressive behavior conducted through electronic means, such as smartphones, computers, or tablets. It can occur on platforms like social media, text messages, email, online games, or chat rooms. Common examples include sending abusive messages, spreading lies or rumors, sharing embarrassing photos or videos, or impersonating someone to damage their reputation. Because it can happen at any time and reach a large audience instantly, cyberbullying can have serious emotional and psychological effects on the victim, often making it difficult to find a safe space or support..

- Spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos or videos of someone on social media;
- Sending hurtful, abusive or threatening messages, images or videos via messaging platforms;
- Impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf or through fake accounts;
- Engaging in sexual harassment or bullying using generative AI tools



Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

Cyberbullying examples

WHO/Europe study example

One in six school-aged children experiences cyberbullying, finds new [WHO/Europe study](#) - Mar 27, 2024, WHO/Europe today released the second volume of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, which focuses on patterns of bullying and peer violence among adolescents across 44 countries and regions.

Amanda Todd suicide

Amanda Todd was a 15-year-old Canadian teenager who became the victim of severe cyberbullying after a stranger convinced her to expose herself on a webcam, later using the image to blackmail her by threatening to share it with her family and friends unless she sent more explicit content. Despite changing schools multiple times, Amanda continued to face relentless harassment both online and in person, as the photo was widely circulated, leading to name-calling, slut-shaming, and social isolation. In an effort to raise awareness, she posted a YouTube video using handwritten cards to share her painful experience, but tragically, she died by suicide a few weeks later. Her story sparked global attention, becoming a powerful example of the dangers of cyberbullying and online exploitation, and eventually led to legal reforms and the conviction of a Dutch man linked to her case and others.

Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

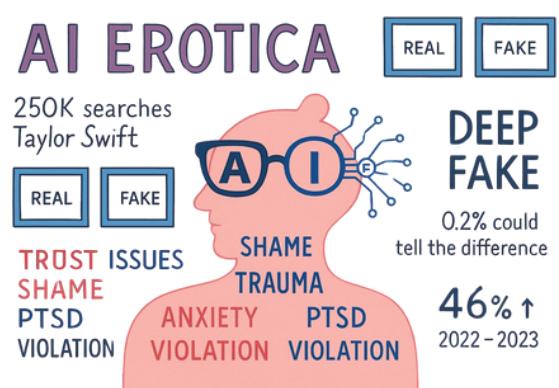
Why cyberbullying matters?

Cyberbullying has a profound impact on individuals and society. Mentally, it can lead to serious issues such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts, often worsened by the constant and inescapable nature of online harassment. It also affects academic achievement and professional performance, as victims may struggle with concentration, motivation, and emotional well-being.

Addressing cyberbullying is crucial for creating healthier digital environments. By preventing toxic behavior online, we promote safer, more respectful communities. Educating people, especially young users, about the ethical and responsible use of technology fosters empathy and helps prevent future cases of cyberbullying. There are also legal and social consequences for those who engage in such behavior, reinforcing the importance of treating others with respect online. Lastly, by tackling cyberbullying effectively, we can help stop the cycle of abuse and reduce the chances that victims may become bullies themselves.

How to recognize cyberbullying?

Recognizing the signs of cyberbullying is key to addressing it early and protecting those involved. Victims often show emotional, behavioral, and social changes, while bullies may repeatedly engage in harmful or manipulative online behavior. Being aware of these red flags can help prevent further harm and guide appropriate support or intervention.



Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

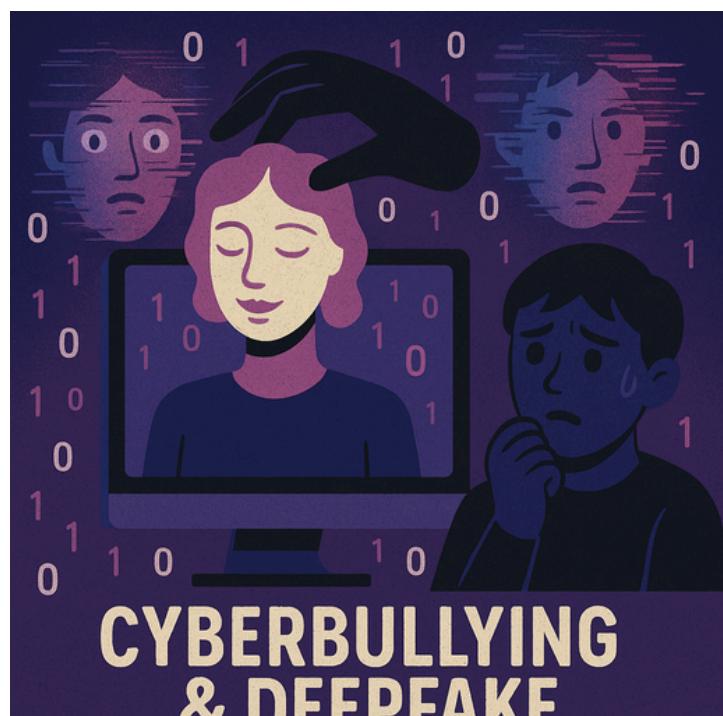
Cyberbullying red flags

In victim:

- Behavioral Changes:
 - Sudden withdrawal from online or social activities;
 - Avoidance of school or group events;
 - Secretive use of devices;
 - Avoiding discussions about online life;
 - Disrupted sleep or eating habits.
- Emotional Indicators:
 - Sadness, anxiety, or depression after screen time;
 - Low self-esteem or hopelessness;
 - Irritability or mood swings.
- Attitude and Social Shifts:
 - Loss of interest in hobbies;
 - Isolation from friends or family;
 - Defensive or evasive behavior.

In bully:

- Sends repeated hurtful or mocking messages
- Hides bullying as "jokes" or sarcasm
- Uses guilt, threats, or pressure to manipulate
- Publicly shames, excludes, or embarrasses others
- Acts inconsistently, kind one moment, cruel the next
- Shares private info or photos without permission
- Causes fear, shame, or anxiety in others online



Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

How to prevent cyberbullying?

Preventing cyberbullying requires a proactive approach from both Youthworkers and Youngsters. Youth workers play a key role in educating and supporting young people, while Youngsters can help create a safer online environment through kindness, awareness, and action and learn how to deal with these types of situations. Together, these efforts can build a more respectful and protective digital space for everyone.

Tips for youth workers

- Educate young people on digital safety, consent, and respectful online behavior.
- Facilitate open conversations about e-intimacy, emotions, and online risks.
- Provide safe reporting channels where youth can share concerns without fear.
- Collaborate with schools and platforms to act quickly when harm occurs.
- Empower youth by involving them in awareness campaigns or peer leadership roles.

Tips for youngsters

- Be kind and respectful online; think before sharing or commenting.
- Watch out for red flags like fake profiles, pressure, or inappropriate content.
- Support your friends if they're targeted
- Use privacy settings and keep personal info limited.
- Report harmful content

Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

How to respond to cyberbullying?

When cyberbullying is already taking place, youth workers but also youngsters need support, clarity, and action steps. Start by validating their experience, whether they're being targeted themselves or managing a group where bullying is occurring. Reassure them that it's not a failure on their part, and that seeking help is a strength. Provide access to clear internal protocols or help them develop one: who to report to, how to document incidents, and what boundaries to set with the youth involved.

Tips for youth workers

- Document evidence: Save screenshots, note dates/times, and record usernames or platforms.
- Avoid direct engagement: Don't respond to bullies, focus on protecting the youth and promoting respectful norms.
- Offer private check-ins: Provide safe, confidential spaces for affected individuals to talk.
- Pause online activity if needed: Temporarily stop digital engagement until a safe plan is in place.
- Connect to peer support: Use group talks or peer mentoring to ease emotional stress.
- Provide training: Teach skills in conflict resolution, de-escalation, and trauma-informed responses.
- Refer when needed: In serious cases, involve mental health professionals or law enforcement.
- Remind them they're not alone: Emphasize shared responsibility and collective support.

Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

Tips for youngsters

- Tell someone you trust like a parent or teacher.
- Ignore the bully to avoid giving them a reaction.
- Calmly ask them to stop, if you feel safe.
- Save all evidence like screenshots and messages, voice messages.
- Block the bully to cut off contact.
- Report it to the platform or service where it happened.
- Call the police if there's a threat to your safety.

Deep fake and AI erotica

Deep fake AI erotica refers to sexually explicit content generated using artificial intelligence, often combining deepfake technology with AI-generated imagery or text. This content typically manipulates or fabricates a person's likeness, such as their face or voice, without their consent, placing it into erotic or pornographic scenarios.

Deepfake and AI-generated erotica use advanced technology to create realistic but fake sexual content. Deepfakes digitally replace someone's face or voice in videos, while AI can generate explicit images or stories. When made without consent, especially involving real people, this content becomes a serious violation of privacy and dignity. It is often used to harass or humiliate, with women and public figures being frequent targets. The rapid spread and difficulty in removing such content make it a growing digital threat that demands greater awareness, regulation, and digital responsibility.

Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

- Financial fraud: Deepfakes can impersonate voices or faces to trick people into giving money or sensitive info; AI-erotica may be used for blackmail or extortion.
- Political manipulation: Fake videos or images can damage politicians' reputations, spread false information, or influence elections.
- Media misinformation: Deepfake erotica blurs the line between real and fake content, making it harder to trust genuine news and media.
- Employment fraud: Fake videos or audio might be used to deceive employers, manipulate HR decisions, or harass employees with false explicit material.
- Celebrity impersonations: Celebrities' likenesses are often exploited in AI-generated erotica, harming their reputation and violating privacy.

Deep fake and AI erotica example

In January 2024, explicit AI-generated deep fake images of [Taylor Swift](#) circulated widely on social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter), amassing over 47 million views before removal. These non-consensual images sparked public outrage and prompted calls for stronger legislation against such abuses. In response, U.S. lawmakers introduced the DEFIANCE Act to criminalize the creation and distribution of non-consensual deep fake pornography.



Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

Why deep fake and AI erotica matters?

Deepfake and AI-erotica content seriously violate privacy and dignity by creating non-consensual images or videos that can damage victims' reputations. This technology is often used for harassment and exploitation, including blackmail, sextortion, and public humiliation. It also contributes to disinformation by manipulating speeches and spreading false news. Many uses of deepfake technology are illegal and can lead to criminal charges. Additionally, the widespread presence of such content undermines digital trust, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish real from fake and weakening online credibility. These issues raise important ethical questions about the responsible use of emerging technologies.

How to recognize deep fake and AI erotica?

Recognizing deepfake and AI-generated erotica is important to protect yourself and others from manipulation and harm. There are several common signs that can help you identify this type of content and avoid falling victim to it.

Red flags

- File quality seems low or manipulated, over-filtered or overly perfect
- Posted by accounts that frequently post explicit, sensational, or revenge content
- Anonymous or fake profiles sending AI-generated sexual content
- Links to unknown websites that promise to show "leaked" or "private" content

Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

How to prevent deep fake and AI erotica incidents?

Preventing the harm caused by deepfakes and AI-generated erotica requires education, awareness, and active involvement from both youth workers and young people. By fostering critical thinking, promoting safe online habits, and encouraging responsible behavior, we can reduce the spread and impact of manipulated content.

Tips for youth workers

- Educate what deepfakes are, how they work, and how they can be misused (e.g. fake nudes, false accusations).
- Help youth learn to question and verify videos and images before believing or sharing them.
- Use real-life examples to show the emotional and reputational damage deepfakes can cause.
- Set up safe systems for young people to report if they're targeted or see someone else being harmed.
- Partner with digital security professionals or platforms to stay updated and protect youth.

Tips for youngsters

- Don't spread videos or photos that seem suspicious or could hurt someone.
- Speak up if you see a friend being targeted
- Be careful with personal images/videos online. The less public material available, the harder it is to misuse.
- Think critically: Just because something "looks real" doesn't mean it is.
- Use trusted apps/tools that help detect or flag deepfakes (e.g. Google's reverse image search, deepfake detection tools).

Cyberbullying and deep fake/AI erotica

How to respond to deep fake and AI erotica?

When youth workers encounter cases involving AI deepfakes or AI-generated erotica, they need clear guidance, support, and emotional backup. These situations are distressing for both youth and adults, who may feel overwhelmed by technology used to violate someone's identity without consent. It's important to validate their feelings, emphasize the real harm caused, and provide tools and reassurance that they are not alone in handling it.

Tips for youth workers

- Acknowledge emotional impact; provide space to process feelings.
- Help safely document incidents (screenshots, links, timestamps) without sharing further.
- Prioritize youth safety; remove from harmful spaces and validate their experience.
- Support sensitive conversations with families.
- Connect with experts like digital rights groups or legal advisors.
- Offer training on AI media, spotting fakes, and age-appropriate explanations.
- Guide on reporting to platforms, police involvement, and takedown requests.

Tips for youngsters

- Tell a trusted adult immediately, don't keep it to yourself.
- Don't respond to the bully to avoid escalation.
- Save evidence: screenshots, usernames, links, and dates.
- Report content using platform tools (e.g., "sexual content," "harassment," "fake content").
- Use resources like StopNCII.org and eSafety.gov.au to remove content.
- Report to police or school officers if unsafe or if a minor.
- Seek support from counselors or helplines.
- Don't share or repost the content, even if it involves you.
- Remember, it's not your fault

Sextortion



Sextortion

What is sextortion?

Sextortion is when someone threatens to share private or sexual images of you unless you give the money, more photos or do something else they want. It's a form of blackmail and serious crime.

Sextortion example

Jordan DeMay suicide

Jordan DeMay, 17, from Michigan, was tricked on Instagram by scammers posing as a girl. After sharing an explicit photo, he was blackmailed for \$1,000. He paid \$300, but the threats continued. When he expressed suicidal thoughts, the scammers mocked him. Jordan died by suicide. Two Nigerian men were later extradited and sentenced to 17 years in prison.

Why sextortion matters?

Sextortion has deep and lasting consequences. Victims often experience:

- Severe psychological impact - Anxiety, depression, panic attacks, shame, and long-term trauma are common reactions.
- Disruption to daily life - Victims may struggle with school, university, or work performance due to emotional stress or social withdrawal.
- Career consequences - In some cases, reputations are damaged, or victims are harassed professionally, limiting future opportunities.
- Loss of trust - It becomes harder for victims to trust others, including friends, partners, or online communities.
- Suicidal thoughts and loss of purpose - The emotional toll can be so overwhelming that some victims feel hopeless or lose their sense of purpose in life.
- Social isolation and insecurities - Victims often withdraw from their social circles, feel unsafe, or are bullied and shamed by others.
- Life-long consequences - Digital content can resurface years later, affecting relationships, self-esteem, and future opportunities.
- Damage to personal identity - Victims may feel defined by the incident or exploited version of themselves, creating identity struggles.

Sextortion

How to recognize sextortion?

Look out for common warning signs, including:

- Too good to be true profiles
- Unrealistically attractive images, few followers, or generic bios – often signs of fake accounts.
- Refusal to video call
- They avoid live video or make excuses, suggesting they're not who they claim to be.
- Pressure and manipulation
- They rush intimacy, ask for explicit content quickly, or guilt you into sharing.
- Switching platforms
- They push to move the conversation to encrypted apps like Telegram or WhatsApp – a tactic to avoid detection.

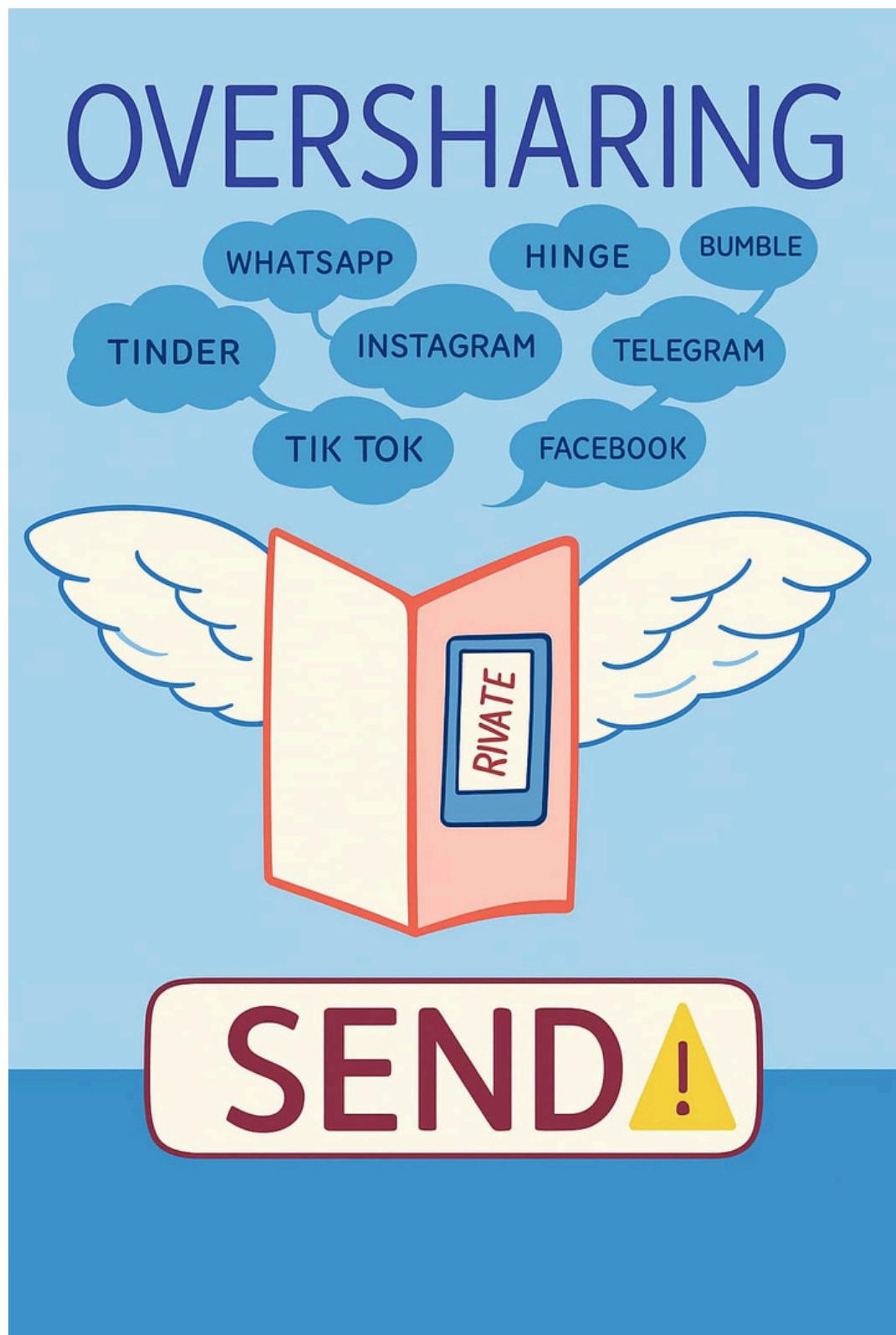
How to prevent sextortion?

- Verify identity - Don't trust someone online without proof of who they are – ask for a live video call or mutual contacts.
- Watch for red flags - Stay alert to signs like fake profiles, fast-moving conversations, or pressure to switch platforms.
- Stay informed - Awareness is your best defense – understand how sextortion works and talk about it with others.

How to respond to sextortion?

- Don't engage or respond - Stop communication, but don't block them right away, it helps to gather evidence.
- Save everything - Take screenshots and record usernames, messages, and dates. This evidence can help investigations.
- Don't send money - Paying won't stop the threats, it often makes things worse.
- Report the account - Report the person to the platform and, if possible, to a trusted adult or local authorities.

Oversharing



Oversharing

What is oversharing?

Oversharing personal details online, whether consciously or unconsciously, can have serious consequences. As online communication becomes more casual and open, many people reveal intimate parts of their lives without realizing the risks. This kind of disclosure can make someone vulnerable to stalking, mobbing, or even criminal activity. It can also affect both parties: the person sharing too much and the one receiving the information. The consequences go beyond immediate danger, oversharing can damage relationships, open the door to manipulation and exploitation, and negatively impact one's mental health.

Oversharing example

4 types of oversharing

The article "Oversharing: 4 Types of Oversharers and How To Handle Them" identifies four common oversharer types.

- The provocateur, who seeks attention by sharing shocking details
- The voyeur, who asks many personal questions without reciprocating
- The clinger, who quickly reveals struggles to form bonds
- The accountant, who gathers information to judge others and recommends setting clear boundaries and using strategies like redirecting conversations, giving neutral responses, or encouraging appropriate support to manage these interactions and protect one's privacy and emotional wellbeing.



Oversharing

Why oversharing matters?

- Mental health: Sharing too much personal information can lead to feelings of regret and anxiety, especially if the information is later used against you or causes embarrassment. It can also increase emotional vulnerability, making it harder to cope with stress or criticism.
- Digital safety: Oversharing online exposes you to risks like data misuse, where private details can be stolen or exploited. It can also lead to cyberbullying or sextortion, where harmful individuals use your shared content to manipulate, threaten, or harm you.
- Body consciousness: When self-worth becomes tied to online validation such as likes, comments, or followers, oversharing can distort how you see yourself and your body. This reliance on external approval may harm your confidence and contribute to unhealthy body image.
- Relationship boundaries: Excessive sharing can blur the line between authentic connection and performing for acceptance. It may cause confusion about trust and privacy, making it difficult to establish healthy boundaries in relationships and potentially leading to exploitation or emotional harm.



Oversharing

How to recognize oversharing?

Oversharing happens when someone shares too much personal information online – details that can put their safety, privacy, or mental well-being at risk. It might include:

- Posting your real-time location
- Sharing private thoughts or emotional struggles with a public audience
- Posting intimate photos or personal data without boundaries
- Sharing daily routines or habits that could make you traceable

How to prevent it and support young people?

Oversharing isn't always intentional, that's why awareness and support matter. Here are some ways to prevent it and help others do the same:

- Delay posting your location. Don't tag or share where you are while you're still there. Post it later, when you've left the place.
- Keep your profile private. Only accept follow requests or friend requests from people you genuinely know.
- Have an emergency contact. Make sure a trusted friend or family member can access your location if needed.
- Talk about digital boundaries. Encourage open conversations about what feels okay to share and what doesn't.

What to do if it happens?

If you or someone you know has already overshared, here's what to do:

- Delete or edit the post as soon as possible to limit exposure.
- Reach out for support – a friend, a youth worker, or someone you trust.
- Check privacy settings and update them immediately.
- Report any unwanted attention or harmful responses on the platform.
- Reflect, don't shame. Use it as a learning moment, not a reason to feel guilty.

Grooming



Grooming

What is grooming?

Grooming is a manipulative process used by perpetrators through the digital or physical world to emotionally, physically, or sexually exploit vulnerable individuals, most often children and teenagers.

It can happen quickly or gradually, but the core strategy involves building trust in order to shift the victim's sense of what is safe or acceptable behavior. The abuser typically starts by appearing kind, helpful, and trustworthy by offering attention, compliments, gifts, or emotional support to form a connection. As trust develops, the groomer may begin to isolate the victim from friends or family and introduce inappropriate topics or behavior, slowly normalizing them.

Grooming examples

Grooming is a manipulative process used by perpetrators through the digital or physical world to emotionally, physically, or sexually exploit vulnerable individuals, most often children and teenagers.

Grooming through social media and online platforms

At just 13 years old, Lennon found herself thrown into the spotlight thanks to her dancing and reality TV appearances. Like many children her age, she got her first iPhone and was eager to explore social media, especially Instagram. Eventually, she ventured into adult chat rooms, where she adeptly maneuvered through age verification processes and began interacting with adults. These interactions often transitioned from simple chats to requests for private photos, placing Lennon in a harmful loop of "shame, guilt, and curiosity" until supportive, real-life connections helped her break free from it.

Grooming

Grooming leading to sextortion

Ryan Chen, 23, was targeted on the dating app Tantan. What began as friendly, flirty messages and a sense of connection quickly turned sexual. The woman he thought lived nearby persuaded him to share intimate videos. However, she was part of a sextortion ring in the Philippines that demanded \$4,000 and threatened to share the videos with his friends and family on Facebook. This form of grooming starts with affection, escalates to intimacy, then shifts to control and blackmail. Although common, it is rarely discussed. Many victims like Ryan feel ashamed and isolated. His case shows how predators exploit emotional vulnerability for financial gain, hiding behind everyday digital platforms.

Why grooming matters?

Grooming has serious emotional, psychological, and social consequences. It can deeply affect a person's sense of identity, damage their self-esteem, and disrupt their ability to form healthy relationships. Victims often experience lasting feelings of guilt, shame, confusion, and fear. Understanding the impact is crucial because this isn't just an online issue, it's a problem with long-term effects. The consequences of grooming go beyond emotional pain, it often leads to deep social isolation, disrupts daily life, and impairs work or school performance. Victims may struggle to maintain routines, focus, or even trust those around them. But with early recognition and support, much of the damage can be prevented or healed. That's why open conversations, education, and awareness are essential. We need to recognize the warning signs, support those affected, and take grooming seriously to protect vulnerable people.

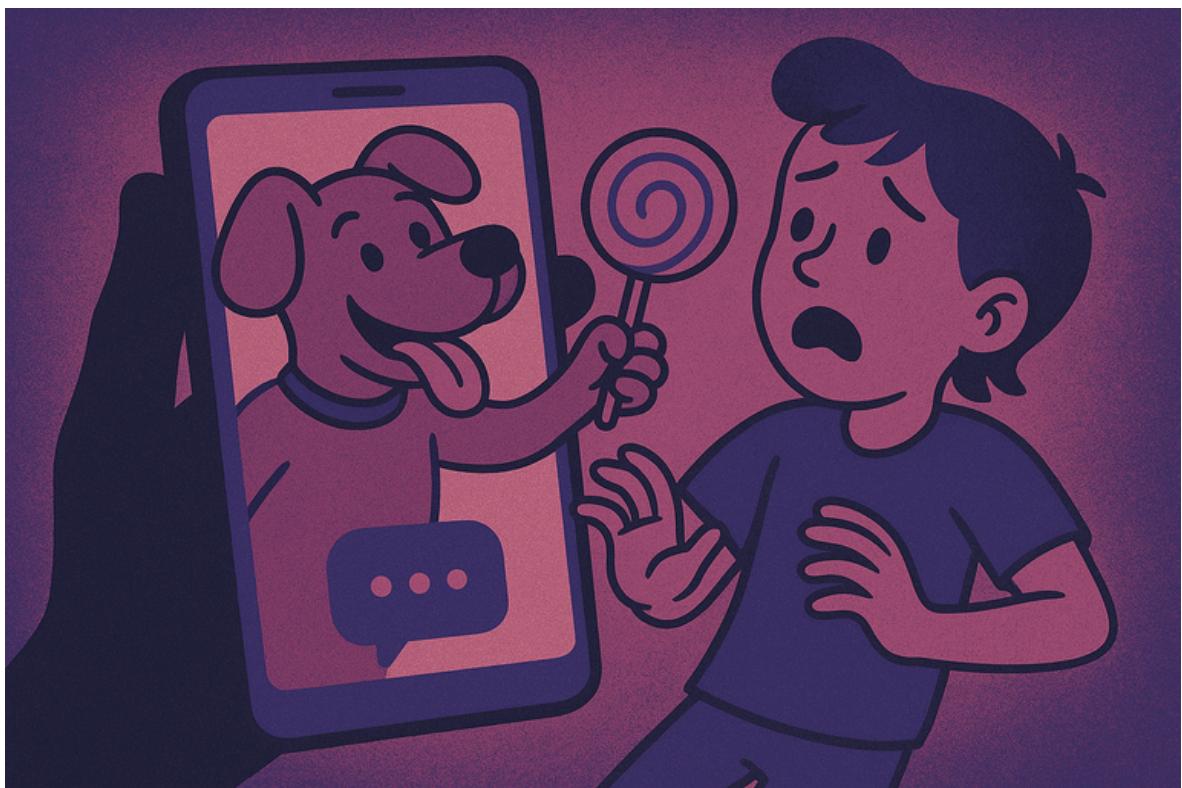


Grooming

How to recognize grooming?

Victims may show emotional and social changes, behavioral red flags, and physical or lifestyle changes.

- Spends less time with family and friends or avoids social activities.
- Becomes quiet, melancholic, or emotionally distant.
- Lack of motivation, poor performance, or disinterest in activities once enjoyed.
- Refuses to talk about online activity or new “friends.”
- Hides screens, quickly changes tabs, or refuses to hand over their phone.
- Uses electronic devices especially late at night or during private hours.
- Uses language or references inappropriate for their age.
- May try to look older or dress differently.
- Possessions or gifts they can't explain, possibly sent by the groomer.



Grooming

Predators often use excessive compliments and attention, give gifts or favors, share secrets early on, build a deep emotional connection, appear trustworthy and safe, push for privacy, demand secrecy, apply emotional pressure or threats, and maintain suspicious or vague online profiles.

- Say things like “You’re special”, “I understand you better than anyone.” or “you are too mature for your age”
- Gives lots of praise to build trust quickly
- Acts of love bombing to persuade
- Sends money, presents, or offers help to gain loyalty.
- May say the victim “owes” them in return.
- Tells personal stories or secrets to create a false sense of closeness.
- Encourages the child to do the same.
- Spends lots of time chatting or messaging.
- Acts as if they are the victim’s only true friend or support system.
- Pretends to be kind, caring, or “just like” the victim.
- Often has a made-up backstory that seems believable.
- Asks to move from public platforms (like Instagram or TikTok) to private chats, text messages, or encrypted apps.
- Avoids being seen or reported by others.
- Say things like “Don’t tell anyone about this” or “They wouldn’t understand.”
- Uses secrecy to control the situation and keep the victim silent.
- Says “If you really cared about me, you’d do this.”
- May make the victim feel guilty, ashamed, or afraid.
- Has little personal info, few photos, or barely any followers.
- May use fake names or pretend to be younger than they are.

Grooming

How to prevent grooming?

Tips for youth workers

- Develop a visual "Red Flag/Green Flag" guide that outlines healthy vs. unhealthy online interactions (e.g. "Asks about your day" vs. "Asks you to keep secrets").
- Introduce anonymous question boxes (physical or digital) for youth to ask tough questions they might be afraid to say aloud.
- Explain common grooming tactics and specific signs: building trust quickly (excessive compliments), isolating from friends/family, emotional manipulation (pressure to share images, guilt-tripping) and requests for secrecy.
- Show them how to check and change privacy settings on social media/apps.
- Connect families with resources like helplines, websites, or support groups.
- Share real-life stories (anonymized or case-based) to show how grooming happens and what it can look like.

Tips for youngsters

Practice saying "no" or "I'm not comfortable" when someone asks you to do something online.

- Block anyone who makes you uncomfortable or asks for private info.
- Set your social media accounts to private and regularly check and update who follows or messages you. Constantly review your privacy settings on all apps.
- Install apps or use phone features that monitor screen time or alert to risky messages, like Bark, Qustodio, or built-in parental tools (if age-appropriate).
- Unlink your social media from your phone number to prevent strangers from finding you through contact sync.
- Avoid posting personal info like your location, school, or daily routines.



Grooming

What to do when grooming happens?

Supporting a victim of grooming requires sensitivity, respect, and care. The goal is to ensure their safety, protect their privacy, and empower them to make decisions at their own pace. A non-judgmental and empathetic approach can make a crucial difference in their recovery and willingness to seek help.

- Protect the victim's privacy: Talk in private and never share their situation without their permission.
- Don't pressure them to talk: Let them open up when they're ready—avoid pushing or forcing disclosure.
- Avoid confronting the abuser: This could increase the risk to the victim and escalate the situation.
- Practice active, non-judgmental listening: Avoid phrases like "Why did you do it?" or "You shouldn't have..."
- Show empathy and understanding: Reassure the victim that they are not to blame.
- Respect their choices about who to involve: Support involving trusted people—like family, school staff, or professionals—but only with the victim's agreement.
- Encourage evidence preservation (if safe): Save messages, screenshots, or other proof discreetly to support any future report.
- Review and tighten digital privacy settings: Help the victim limit who can contact them on apps and social media.
- Report abuse through proper channels: Use the reporting tools on apps and websites to take action.
- Reach out to specialized organizations or helplines: These services offer guidance, protection, and emotional support.
- Trust instincts: If something feels wrong, act—feelings are valid and should be taken seriously.
- Promote confidential support options: Share information about helplines and chat services that offer anonymous help without judgment.

Fake profiles on dating apps



Fake profiles on dating apps

What are fake profiles on dating apps?

A fake profile on a dating app is an account created using false information, usually impersonating someone. The purpose is often to scam, troll or entertain, harvest personal data, or spy on others

Fake profiles on dating apps examples

Emotional manipulation

They use emotional manipulation to influence, control or see another person's behavior or decisions, often by creating a false sense of trust, closeness, or obligation. The false profile tries to build a quick emotional connection to lower your guard.

Example: Nina says, "you are the only one who understands me", shares emotional stories, and then asks for money to stay in touch, making the other person feel guilty if they say no. This creates emotional pressure: the person feels responsible for her well-being, even though they have never met in real life.

Romance scams

In romance scams, a criminal uses a fake online identity to gain a victim's affection and trust. Eventually the scammer may ask you for money, for travel, a medical emergency or family assistance - making it seem urgent.

Example: Lisa meets "David" online. He claims to be an engineer on an oil rig. They message daily, and he soon says he's in love. After a few weeks, he asks for money for an emergency surgery, saying his bank account is frozen. Worried, Lisa sends €1,500. More requests follow until she realizes David was never real.

Fake profiles on dating apps

Gathering personal data

Fake profiles can also serve the purpose of collecting sensitive personal information, such as your location, workplace, daily habits, or social media handles. At first, the conversation may feel casual and friendly, but the questions are often designed to gradually uncover private details. This information can later be used to track someone's movements, impersonate them online, or even commit identity theft.

Example: A fake profile chats with someone and casually asks, "Where do you usually hang out on weekends?" or "What is your full name so I can find you on Instagram?" While these may seem like normal questions in the context of flirting, they can help the person behind the fake profile build a full picture of the victim's identity and routine-sometimes with dangerous consequences.

Ego boosting or spying

Some fake profiles are created by people who already know the target, such as friend, partner, or ex. Their goal is not always to scam or harm, but to test trust, observe behavior, or boost their own self-worth. These fake profiles may be used to check whether a partner is faithful, to monitor an ex's activity, or simply to see how attractive or popular they are on the app. While it might seem harmless or even justified to the person doing it, this behavior often leads to emotional manipulation, broken trust, and conflict.

Example: A girl creates a fake profile of an attractive woman to match her boyfriend. She starts flirting with him, through the fake account to see if he stays loyal. When he responds positively, she takes screenshots and confronts him. Although her intention was to "find out the truth", the entire situation is built on deception and can seriously damage the relationship.

Fake profiles on dating apps

Inappropriate offline consequences

Fake profiles can blur the line between online and offline world, leading to real-life encounters based on lies. When people meet in person under false pretenses such as age, identity, or intentions, the result can be uncomfortable, emotionally distressing, or even dangerous. What begins as a harmless chat online can quickly turn into a situation that the other person wasn't prepared for or did not consent to.

Example: A teenager created a fake profile, claiming to be older, and begins chatting with an adult. They eventually agree to meet in person. When the truth comes out, the adult may feel deceived and the situation can become unsafe, especially if boundaries are crossed or legal lines are involved. Even when no harm is intended, misleading someone about who you are puts both sides at risk- emotionally, legally, and physically

Why fake profiles on dating apps matter?

Fake profiles on dating apps are more than just harmless jokes or minor deceptions. They can have real emotional, financial, and psychological consequences. They exploit people's desire for connection and trust, often leading to betrayal, manipulation, or harm. Victims may feel embarrassed, isolated, or deeply hurt, especially when their feelings were genuine. What's more, this kind of deception is often normalized or ignored in digital culture. People say, "It's just the internet," or "Everyone lies a little online," but these attitudes can silence those who are affected and blur the line between playful and abusive behavior. Talking about it openly helps to break the silence, protect vulnerable users, and promote a culture of honesty, respect, and safety- both online and offline.

Fake profiles on dating apps

How to recognize fake profiles on dating apps?

Youth workers and educators play a crucial role in helping young people avoid falling victim to fake profiles and online manipulation. Through education, open communication, and modeling positive behavior, they can empower youth to navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

Tips for youth workers

- Teach digital literacy: Show how to identify red flags like vague profiles, overly polished photos, or unusual online behavior.
- Promote safe online habits: Encourage privacy, caution with personal information, and not accepting requests from strangers.
- Organize workshops and discussions: Create spaces where young people can explore online risks in a practical, engaging way.
- Lead by example: Demonstrate responsible, respectful, and critical behavior in your own digital interactions.

Tips for youngsters

- Username: Look for the same name with reverse names, same characters changed but same person in the photos.
- Followers: Look at the target audience in the followers if they are open available to everyone, usually the target audience are people with the same age usually (algorithmically speaking)
- Status: Comments on the post, normally the post would have either little to no comments.
- Reverse Image: Upload the photos to a reverse search engine in google to see if these photos are available online on different platforms or other websites. If the photos are found for copyrighting rights is a red flag for fake profile
- Surname: If the accounts friends list is open, check for other profiles with the same surname as the account holder. If there is none, this might mean this is a fake profile.

Fake profiles on dating apps

How to prevent fake profiles on dating apps?

Parental control software

- Use tools like Qustodio, Norton Family, or Google Family Link to monitor apps, screen time, and online interactions.

Strong privacy settings

- Teach kids (and help configure) strict privacy settings on social platforms to limit who can view or contact them.

AI-powered filtering tools

- Install software that uses machine learning to detect and block suspicious messages, fake accounts, or harmful content.

Empowerment begins with recognition

- Seeing young people not just as recipients of guidance, but as active agents in their own lives. It's about creating spaces where their voices matter, their experiences are valid, and their choices are respected. You don't protect them by telling them "don't do this" you empower them by helping them understand matter, and why their decisions carry weight.

It's about nurturing critical thinking, self-worth, and digital confidence. You give them the tools not just technical, but emotional and ethical to navigate the digital world with dignity. When they feel seen, when their boundaries are honored, when you trust them to rise, they do. Empowerment isn't instruction. It's an invitation.



Fake profiles on dating apps

What to do when we get affected by fake profiles on dating apps?

Tips for youngsters

- Stop responding immediately: Don't engage with the fake profile once you suspect something or if you feel uncomfortable.
- Take screenshots and save evidence: This helps in reporting the fake profile and protecting others from harm as well.
- Tell a trusted adult or youth worker: You deserve support. If something happened online that made you feel unsafe, confused, or scared you don't have to deal with it on your own.
Who can you talk to?
 - A friend who you trust and feel safe with
 - A youth worker or social worker
 - A teacher or school counselor
 - A parent, old sibling, or other trusted adult
 - A helpline or online support chat
- Report and block the profile: Report the profile using the apps safety tools, especially if something feels wrong or unsafe. Block the person to stop any further contact.



Fake profiles on dating apps

Tips for youth workers

Digital education

- Teach what a fake profile is and how scammers operate (romance scams, bots, spying, etc.).
- Help them recognize red flags, such as: perfect-looking photos, rushing into romance or deep connection, avoiding video calls or in-person meetings, asking for money, help, or personal information.

Open communication

- Encourage open, judgment-free conversations about online dating
- Create a safe space where young people feel comfortable sharing doubts or red flags.

Promote critical thinking & privacy awareness

- Don't share private details too early (like address, banking info, or intimate photos)
- Teach how to verify someone's identity (reverse image search, check social media)
- Warn against quickly moving conversations off the app (e.g., to WhatsApp).

Encourage responsible app use

- Recommend apps with profile verification and scam protection.
- Read and understand the app's safety policies and reporting tools.

Give support

- Listen without judgment – many victims feel ashamed or guilty.
- Validate their emotions – remind them they were manipulated, not foolish.
- Offer practical help: report the fake profile to the app, if there was money loss or threats, consider reporting to authorities.
 - Secure their personal info (change passwords, monitor accounts).
 - Encourage emotional support if they're deeply affected (talk to a counselor or therapist).

Glossary of terms

Impact

The lasting emotional, psychological, or relational effect that digital interactions, especially intimate ones, can have on individuals. This includes both positive connections and potentially harmful consequences.

Risky

Engaging in digital intimacy often involves vulnerability. Something is “risky” when it can lead to unintended emotional exposure, privacy breaches, or manipulation.

Anonymous

A state of digital interaction where one's identity is hidden or unclear, which can offer freedom of expression but also increase the potential for harm or deception.

Manipulation

When someone uses emotional or psychological tactics to control another's actions or feelings in digital spaces, especially in intimate exchanges.

Impotence

A feeling of helplessness that can arise when one lacks control over how their digital self or content is shared, perceived, or responded to.

Horny

A natural sexual feeling that, in digital spaces, often drives engagement in e-intimacy. It can be a powerful motivator but requires mutual respect and consent when acted upon online.

Fake

Describes misrepresentation in digital intimacy, of identity, intentions, or emotions, which can lead to confusion, mistrust, or emotional harm.

Glossary of terms

Respect

Crucial in all forms of intimacy, it involves recognizing boundaries, consent, and the emotional safety of others in digital interactions.

Distance

Both a barrier and a bridge in digital intimacy. While physical distance may separate people, digital tools allow emotional closeness to flourish or fade.

Public

What's shared online can easily become visible to a wider audience. Even private messages risk becoming public, making consent and awareness vital.

Responsibility

Each person must engage in digital intimacy ethically, respecting others' boundaries, ensuring consent, and thinking critically before sharing.

Attractive

How someone is perceived as appealing or desirable in digital spaces, often shaped by photos, messages, and curated online personas.

Emotion

Digital intimacy is not just about words or images; it carries real emotional weight, with the power to comfort, hurt, connect, or confuse.

Affection

Acts of care and love expressed digitally, through emojis, texts, voice messages, or images, that create a sense of emotional presence and closeness.

Glossary of terms

Boundaries

Personal limits regarding what, how, and with whom one shares intimate content online. They help maintain emotional safety and agency.

Digital coming out

Revealing aspects of one's identity, such as sexuality or gender, through digital platforms. This can be empowering but also emotionally complex and risky.

Grooming

A manipulative process where someone builds trust online with the intent to exploit, often involving minors. It's a serious form of abuse in digital spaces.

Tensions

The emotional push-and-pull that arises from navigating closeness, desire, fear, and insecurity in digital intimacy.

Discovery

Digital intimacy can be a journey of personal or sexual discovery, offering space to explore identity, attraction, and emotional needs safely.

Expose

To make oneself emotionally or physically vulnerable in a digital space, often through sharing personal content. It also refers to the risk of unwanted exposure.

Explicit

Content that is sexual or emotionally intense. In digital contexts, explicitness requires a heightened awareness of consent and audience.

Glossary of terms

Uncertain

Digital interactions can lack the nonverbal cues and context of in-person communication, making intentions and emotions harder to read or trust.

Unsafe

A situation or interaction where someone feels emotionally or physically at risk, often due to threats to privacy, consent, or well-being.

Consent

Clear, informed, and ongoing agreement to engage in any intimate exchange. In digital intimacy, this includes sharing texts, images, or emotional content.

Private

Spaces or exchanges intended for limited access. Maintaining privacy is central to safe digital intimacy, but it's never fully guaranteed online.

Shame

A negative emotional response that can follow digital intimacy, especially when boundaries are crossed or when private content is shared without consent.

Long distance relationships

Partnerships maintained across physical distance, often relying on digital intimacy to sustain an emotional and sexual connection.

Belonging

The feeling of being accepted and valued in online communities or intimate relationships. Digital intimacy can facilitate deep connections and inclusion.

Glossary of terms

Guilty

An emotion that may arise when one feels they've overstepped boundaries or participated in digital intimacy in a way that conflicts with their values.

Connection

The emotional link formed through digital exchanges, whether romantic, sexual, or platonic, that nurtures a sense of closeness and mutual understanding.

Self-awareness

Understanding one's desires, boundaries, and emotional responses in digital intimacy. It's a key skill for safe and fulfilling online interactions.

Trust

The belief that someone will respect your boundaries, content, and emotions in digital spaces. Trust is fragile and central to digital intimacy.

Desperate

A state of emotional vulnerability that may lead someone to seek validation or intimacy online in unsafe or unbalanced ways.

Exciting

Digital intimacy can bring anticipation, curiosity, and pleasure. It offers new ways to explore oneself and others but must be approached with care.

Lonely

A feeling that can drive digital intimacy. While online connection can alleviate loneliness, it can also deepen it if interactions feel superficial or unreciprocated.

Glossary of terms

Sensibility

The ability to approach digital intimacy with emotional intelligence, empathy, and awareness of others' feelings and needs.

Fear

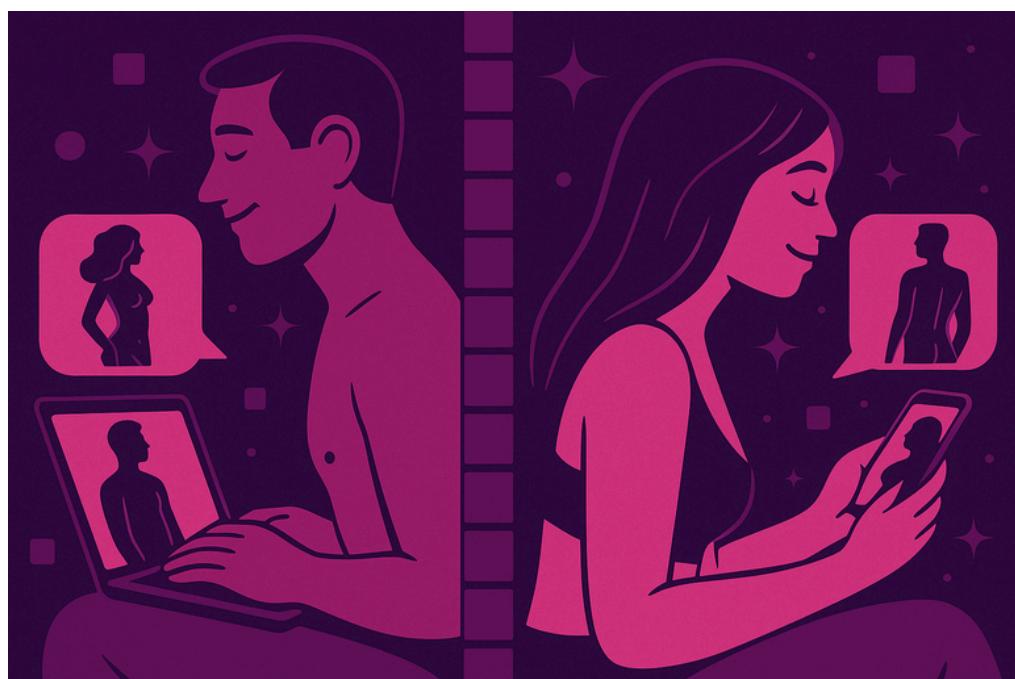
An emotion often linked to the uncertainty and vulnerability involved in sharing oneself online, especially around exposure, judgment, or rejection.

Anxiety

Digital intimacy can trigger emotional unease, and worry about how one is perceived, if boundaries will be respected, or if trust will be broken.

Scamming

When someone deceives others online, often for personal gain, financial or emotional, under the guise of romantic or intimate interest.



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