



# I am a **Survivor** of **Sextortion**

## Discussion Guide



**NetSmartz**<sup>®</sup>

A program of the  
  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR  
**MISSING &  
EXPLOITED**  
CHILDREN

# I am a Survivor of Sextortion

This video shows some of the feelings that children may experience while going through sextortion or other forms of victimization and how those feelings kept them from reaching out for help. We hope that this video will demonstrate that sextortion is not their fault and that help is available to them; they should never face this alone. After watching the video, discuss some of the questions below. Listen, learn from them, empathize, and let them know that you are there to help.

**What were some of the feelings the survivors experienced?**

**Fear**

**Shame**

**Guilt**

It's crucial to reassure your child that it is normal to have intense emotions when experiencing sextortion. At the same time, it's equally as important to emphasize that help is available, and that if they ever experience sextortion, they are not alone. Make it clear they're not to blame and that you will help and support them regardless of the circumstances if they are ever victimized. Sextortion is especially devastating for teens because they are deeply influenced by emotions and highly value their reputation among their peers as they are exploring their independence and role in society. Support and guidance are vital to help teens navigate this challenging situation and mitigate its impact on their well-being and future. When discussing the potential risks of sending explicit images or messages, please provide resources they can use and share with their friends for help, such as **'Take It Down'** and the **'CyberTipline.'** Let your child know that in the unfortunate event that something goes wrong, you are there to help and support them.

**Do you identify with some of the feelings mentioned in the video? Have you also experienced some of these feelings when facing a problem? What do you do to cope with those emotions?**

Let participants/children share their opinions.

To help manage strong emotions, suggest activities like taking a short walk, listening to music, or practicing breathing exercises when they are feeling frustrated or angry. Taking such a break can help them make better decisions than those influenced by emotions.

**Facilitators' Notes:** Help your children recognize, understand and manage their emotions, letting them know that feelings are a normal part of life, and that many kids and teens go through similar emotional experiences. Encourage them to explore and develop healthy ways to cope with their emotions and help them create a plan for managing strong feelings.

By providing them with coping strategies, you can empower them to navigate their emotions in a positive and constructive way that reduces impulsive decision making and helps them develop resiliency, critical thinking, and coping strategies.

**If you were in a similar situation where someone was sextorting you, what might prevent you from asking for help? And what would encourage you to reach out for help?**

Let participants/children name reasons that would keep them from asking for help.

Some barriers may include feeling embarrassed, guilty, or scared of getting in trouble. Some kids describe feeling like there is no way out, or adults would not help.

**Facilitators' Notes:** Validate their feelings and reassure them that although it can be difficult to reach out for help sometimes, you are there for them and reaching out for help will make it better. As a trusted adult, your job is to support the child and show compassion. Make sure that you do not use judgmental or victim-blaming language—use 'what' instead of 'why' questions. (**So You Need Some Help...**)

Teach your child to make a report to the CyberTipline or to the app/platform, talk to a **trusted adult**, and/or reach out to NCMEC for support and guidance. Let your child know that if they reach out, you will remain calm and focus on supporting them first and foremost.

**What are four things you could say or do if a friend reaches out for help in a similar situation?**

Let participants/children share their thoughts.

1. **Be supportive.** Let them know that help is available and assure them that you're there for them. Reach out to check on them and offer a listening ear.
2. **Remind them that it is not their fault** and that other kids who have experienced similar situations were better equipped to overcome the circumstances when they sought help.
3. **Help them report** it on the site/app and **CyberTipline.org**.
4. **Help them identify trusted adults** in their lives who can help them, such as a relative, teacher, or counselor.

**Facilitators' Notes:** We aim for children to be upstanders and support each other. Our goal is to steer children away from victim-blaming and to discourage tolerance or participation in victimization by their peers. Help them grow and practice empathy toward others.

## Can you name some possible silver linings from going through an experience like this?

Let participants/children brainstorm some ideas; here are some examples:

- **Personal resilience:** You may discover your inner strength and resilience, learning more about your capacity to bounce back from adversity, and gain wisdom from the experience.
- **Strengthened relationships:** Experiencing support and love during tough times can lead to stronger bonds with those who stood by you. It may also result in the development of new friendships based on shared experiences.
- **Discovering new things, experiences, and goals:** Sometimes, when facing difficult situations, opportunities for self-expansion and the pursuit of new goals arise, expanding our horizons. This can open the door to new opportunities, such as becoming an advocate for others, serving as a role model, or uncovering previously unknown interests and passions.
- **Become a role model or advocate:** Many who have experienced victimization or adversity have become leaders in their community, fearless advocates for change, and exceptional role models for others.

**Facilitators' Notes:** Encouraging your child to reflect on these potential positive outcomes is crucial for fostering a sense of hope and optimism amid challenging situations. Such reflection may also help mitigate negative crisis reactions or feelings of hopelessness. Many survivors have expressed feelings of hopelessness, as if their future was ruined or there was no way out. We want our children to know that even in the midst of a horrible situation, things can get better, and some positive things can come out of it.

