How to support a young person going through sexual extortion – without judgement

If a young person tells you they've been sexually extorted, your immediate response matters. It's natural to feel shocked, angry or scared – but remember, they've come to you because they trust you.

Resources by young people, for young people

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Stay calm and reassuring

Where you can, try to keep any anger or shock from showing in the moment.

"Thank you for telling me. This isn't your fault. We'll get through this together."

It isn't their fault

- The blame sits entirely with the person who is extorting them.
- A young person is probably already carrying shame and a fear of judgement.

Avoid any question that could sound like blame:

"Why did you..."
"I told you to be careful."

Listen before taking action

- Give them time and space to explain what's happened in their own words, without interrupting or pushing.

Practical steps to take together

- **Save everything** – screenshots of messages, the person who extorted them's profile, usernames and any payment demands.
- **Block, but don't delete** – block the person who extorted them on every platform they've used, but keep the profile and messages rather than deleting them. These will be useful as evidence.
- **Help them protect their accounts** – review privacy settings and passwords together.
- **Report the images** – use the Take It Down Tool to help remove or stop the spread of intimate images.
- **Report what happened** – to the platform it happened on and to NCMEC's CyberTipline or law enforcement.

It's OK to find these steps overwhelming. Being kind and patient is the most important thing. You can also refer to our resource: "I've been a victim of sexual extortion – what do I do?"

Keep the door open

- Let them know they can come to you about anything, without fear of losing their phone or being told off.
- Support doesn't end after one conversation – check in gently over time and try not to push for more detail.

It's okay to find this hard too

Supporting a young person through this can bring up many emotions for you as well. Remember that you don't have to carry it on your own.

For more support, you can visit:

- Take It Down Tool
- CyberTipline
- I've been a victim of sexual extortion – what do I do?
- Thorn for Parents
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

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