Do you know what sexual extortion is?

Has someone ever threatened to share your sexual images online?

Resources by young people, for young people

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Do you know what sexual extortion is?

Sexual extortion, also called "sextortion", is when someone threatens to share your private, sexual pictures or videos unless you do what they say.

Being sexually extorted is harmful and upsetting – no matter what the person is demanding, whether it's money, more pictures or anything else.

Types of sexual extortion

- **Financial sexual extortion –** someone threatens to share your private images or videos unless you pay them.
- **Relational sexual extortion –** someone you know, like a partner, classmate or friend, threatens to share your private images or videos to control or pressure you.
- **Sadistic sexual extortion –** someone threatens to share your private images or videos not for money, but to scare, hurt or humiliate you.
- **AI-generated sexual extortion –** someone uses generative AI to make fake or edited photos that look real, called deepfakes. Even though the image is fake, it can be just as harmful as a real one – and it's still sexual extortion.

Did you know... technology plays a big part in sexual extortion?
A research report found that 61% of young people targeted knew the person online, and most were threatened through technology too – like messaging apps, social media or video calls.[1]

In 2025, **one in five teens** said they'd experienced sextortion. Some people are more at risk, including:

- LGBTQ+ young people
- Boys aged 14–17
- Young people experiencing loneliness or poverty

Remember: you are not to blame and help is available.

We've put together resources to support you or someone you know who's been affected by sexual extortion.

[1] This information is based on research from Thorn into how sexual extortion affects young people today. Source: Thorn (2025). *Sexual Extortion & Young People: Navigating Threats in Digital Environments*.

What happens when you're sexually extorted?

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What happens when you're sexually extorted?

Sexual extortion usually follows a similar pattern:

1. The person extorting you will use grooming tactics to build a trusting relationship with you. If they don't know you offline, they might create a fake profile that looks real and send you a friend request.

2. The person will start to 'love bomb' you: this involves being very affectionate and giving someone lots of attention very soon into a relationship. The person might also send you a stolen or AI-generated nude image that they claim is of themselves. They will then start asking you to send them sexual content in return.

3. Once you send them an image or other sexual content, they will start to threaten to share this content if you don't do what they say. If you do what they say, they will continue to extort you.

4. Remember: even if you have sent the person money or sexual content, it's never too late to get help. It's not your fault that you are being extorted and help is available.

Sexual extortion can be carried out by a stranger or by someone you already know in real life, like a friend, an ex or even a family member.

The person extorting you will nearly always use some kind of technology as a means: **94% of threats are made through digital platforms such as social media or instant messaging apps.**[1]

There are different demands a person extorting you can make, especially if you know them offline. For example, if the person extorting you is someone you had a romantic relationship with, they might threaten to share your sexual content unless you agree to stay in a relationship with them.

Even if you don't send a sexual image of yourself, the person extorting you can use AI to create one that looks real. **In 2025 alone, 8,029 AI-generated images and videos were assessed by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) as showing realistic child sexual abuse.**[2]

Remember: you are not to blame and help is available.

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[2] This information is based on the Internet Watch Foundation's 2026 report: https://www.iwf.org.uk/media/hl1nvdti/iwf-ai-csam-report-2026.pdf

What are the warning signs of sexual extortion – and how can I protect myself from being targeted?

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What are the warning signs of sexual extortion – and how can I protect myself from being targeted?

Sexual extortion is never the victim's fault, but knowing how to keep yourself protected is really important.

If you're not sure about a new account that's started following you, look into it. Ask yourself:

- **Has their account only been created recently?**
- **Are they tagged in any one else's photos?**
- **Does anyone else that I know offline follow them?**

If you feel that an account is suspicious, you can ignore the follow request or block them.

There are also signs to look out for if you already know the person/have accepted their follow request:

- **Have they sent you sexual content without you asking about it?**
- **Do they seem to be 'love bombing' you or moving really fast to develop a relationship with you?**
- **Do they keep asking you to send them sexually explicit content of yourself?**

If you feel like you might be at risk of sexual extortion, there are ways to stop it from escalating.

Make sure that you **know your own boundaries**. You don't have to share messages, contact information or photos with anyone if you don't feel comfortable doing so.

If you do feel comfortable sharing sexual content with someone, **make sure that you understand the risks involved**. You can't always know what someone will do with this content and there is a risk that they could use it to extort you.

Remember that **no one has the right to a reply from you**. If the contact you have with someone ever feels wrong, you have every right to stop replying.

If you have experienced sexual extortion, remember: you are not to blame and help is available.

I've been a victim of sexual extortion – what do I do?

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I've been a victim of sexual extortion – what do I do?

If you have experienced sexual extortion, it's normal to feel scared and overwhelmed. That's why we've come up with some simple steps to help keep you safe and grounded:

1. The person extorting you will use your panic against you. Getting yourself to a calmer place is an important first step. Box breathing is a simple way to calm your nervous system:

   Breathe in for four seconds,
   hold for four seconds,
   breathe out for four seconds.

   Do this as many times as you need.

2. Collect evidence if you can. Take screenshots of the chat, pictures, videos and webpages.

3. Do not do what the person extorting you says, as this will only continue the extortion. Block them and report what happened to the site you were using. For more information about how to do this, go to the **Revenge Porn Helpline.** It's also a good idea to change your password and update your privacy settings.

4. Tell someone you trust what happened. This could be a friend or an adult that you trust and feel will be there to help you.

5. Report any images to the site where you were extorted and to the **CyberTipline**.

   If you are under 18, report it to NCMEC's **Take It Down Tool**.

   If you are over 18, report it to **StopNCII**.

   If you feel able to, you can also report what happened to your local law enforcement.

6. Remember: **it's not your fault and help is available!**

Remember these steps are a guideline; it's OK if you don't feel able to follow them.

Just remember that being sexually extorted is never your fault and that help is available, whenever you feel ready.

For more support, you can visit:

- Revenge Porn Helpine
- CyberTipline
- Take It Down Tool
- StopNCII
- Child Helpline International

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How can I support a friend who is being sexually extorted?

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How can I support a friend who is being sexually extorted?

Recognising that a friend is being sexually extorted can be tricky. However, there are some signs you can look out for. Your friend might:

- Seem withdrawn or different from usual.
- Be extra protective of their phone or social media.
- Start mentioning someone they met online, but avoiding the details.
- Seem stressed or ask to borrow money to pay someone online.

They may not know how to tell you – that's why listening matters.

Sexual extortion often makes people feel ashamed, even though it's not their fault. That shame can make it even harder to open up. Remember that your friend doesn't deserve to be extorted. You could try telling them:

"I want you to be safe."
"I am here to listen."
"I am glad you told me."

What you can do

1. **Be there for them**. Let your friend know you're on their side.

2. **Don't pressure them for information**. You don't need the full story – just being calm and non-judgemental helps.

3. **Remind them it's not their fault**. Whoever is doing this is the one in the wrong.

4. **Encourage them to tell a trusted adult**. A parent, carer, teacher or someone else they trust can help them report what happened and help get their content taken down through the **Take It Down Tool** (if they're under 18) or the **StopNCII** site (if they're 18 or over).

   If they aren't ready to tell an adult or report what happened, that's OK too. Be patient and let them know that support is there if they change their mind.

5. **Look at the resource "I've been a victim of sexual extortion – what do I do?"** for step-by-step guidance on reporting it and getting the images taken down.

Look after yourself too

Supporting a friend can be exhausting – and you don't have to do it alone. It's OK to ask for support and to take a break if you need one.

Where to get support

Find your local child helpline for support and counselling: **childhelplineinternational.org/helplines**

For more support, you can visit:

- Take It Down Tool
- StopNCII
- I've been a victim of sexual extortion – what do I do?
- Child Helpline International

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How can I reclaim my power after experiencing sexual extortion?

Sexual extortion can leave you feeling like you've lost control – but you can take your power back.

When someone sexually extorts you, they're using 'power over' to control you. This is the power an abuser tries to hold over you, through fear, threats or shame.

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How can I reclaim my power after experiencing sexual extortion?

If you have experienced sexual extortion, remember: **You have more power than it feels like right now.**

- You have the strength to positively influence your life.
- You have the power to come together with other victims to fight injustice.
- You have the power to create positive change.

How to reclaim your power

Protect yourself first

- Block the person. Do not do what they are asking you to.
- Keep your social accounts private and be cautious about who you meet online – especially anyone who moves too fast, 'love bombs' you or pressures you for intimate images.
- When you stop responding the way an extorter wants you to, you've already taken power back.
- It's natural to feel panicked when someone starts sexually extorting you. Try box breathing to help you feel calmer:

  Breathe in for four seconds,
  hold for four seconds,
  breathe out for four seconds.

Get support

- Talk to a friend or trusted adult if you feel you can.
- Reach out to a local helpline.
- Hear from other young people who've experienced sexual extortion. You're not the only one: **nofiltr.org/youth-advice**

Take action

- Report the content and the account to the platform it happened on.
- Use the **Take It Down Tool** to help get the content removed.

Remember: being sexually extorted is not your fault and you have more power than you think.

Reclaiming that power helps us all fight back against sexual extortion.

For more support, you can visit:

Child Helpline International

NoFiltr

Take It Down Tool

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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.

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

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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