

Sexting – CEOP's new films say 'don't panic!' (But do respond.)

Selfies are a new global phenomenon and are often harmless and fun. But selfie-takers don't always keep their clothes on. With the rise of the selfie has come growing concern about young people taking and sharing revealing photos or videos – often referred to in the media as 'sexting'.

Recently published research by the EU research project Spirto, Self-Produced Images: Risk Taking Online, found young people believed that the sending of sexual images was a common and expected behaviour.

Young people are most certainly not the only ones doing this... **perhaps the most surprising fact to come out of the research was that the vast majority of revealing selfies are shared by adults.**

It's potentially risky behaviour, especially for young people... so why do they do it?

Young people have told us that there are many different reasons why they might send a revealing selfie. Often, the picture is sent to a boyfriend or girlfriend they trust. Their motivations are usually to flirt, have fun and feel good about themselves. Sometimes there's no sexual motivation at all, and the image is meant as a joke between friends. But - more worryingly - often some level of persuasion or pressure is involved.¹

Whatever the reason for sending the picture, once a young person has hit 'send,' they've lost control of it.

The consequences for some can be severe: bullying, anxiety and low self-confidence, difficulties with getting future educational or job opportunities and an increased risk of being approached by adults seeking sexual contact online.

How can I keep my child safe?

Get the knowledge you need

- Learn about the apps, services, games and websites your child uses.
- Know what's risky, and how to get help.

Don't wait for something to happen before you talk to your child

- As soon as you feel they're old enough (and remember some children have shared risky selfies while still in primary school) talk to your child about the risks of sharing revealing selfies.

- Make sure your child knows that it is not a good idea to send a revealing selfie, and that they should tell you if anyone ever tries to pressure them to do so.
- Remind your child that when they meet people online, they can't be sure who they really are. It's not safe to share personal pictures or info with anyone they have *only* met online.
- Make sure your children know that they can always come to you if they are worried about anything, that you will understand, and that you will not be angry or blame them.

If you do find out that your child has sent or shared a revealing selfie online...

- **Stay calm.** It can help to find someone who will listen and support you – like a partner, close friend or family member.
- **Talk to your child.** When you feel calm enough, talk to your child about what has happened. Try to understand it from their point of view. Make sure they know that you are not angry and do not blame them. Remember they are probably feeling very anxious.
- **Together, make a plan.** CEOP's *Nude Selfies* films give lots of information about how to get photos taken down online, and where to get help if you need it.

Where to get help

Here are some key sources of support for young people whose revealing image has been shared:

- CEOP has produced four short animated films on their Thinkuknow website. *Nude Selfies: What Parents and Carers Need to Know*. They're packed with information and advice on helping your child avoid taking risks online, how to know what's safe and what's not, and where to get help if anything goes wrong. You can watch the films at www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/nude-selfies (link is external)
- Report to **CEOP** if you have any concerns about grooming, sexual abuse or exploitation, at www.ceop.police.uk (link is external).
- Contact **your child's school** so that they can support your child and follow up the incident with other students who might have seen or shared the photo.
- Report the image to **social networks** it appears on, so that they will take it down quickly. Find out how to do this on some of the most popular sites at www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14_plus/help/contact-social-sites (link is external).
- Report the image to the **Internet Watch Foundation** (iwf.org.uk) if you need their help removing it from a site without a 'report' function.