

Navigating Disclosures: Quick Response Guides

General Concerns

Whether your child made a mistake, witnessed something upsetting, or was targeted by someone else, a supportive response keeps the door open for next time.

Step	What to do
1. Take a deep breath	Your child reads your face before you say a word. Staying calm — even if you feel shocked or upset — keeps the door open for them to keep talking. Say: “I’m really glad you told me. We’re going to figure this out together.”
2. Listen before you ask	Let them tell the story their way first. Avoid interrupting or jumping to conclusions. Say: “Tell me what happened — I’m listening, no rush.”
3. Support, not blame	Focus on support over blame. This is what makes kids feel safe coming to you no matter what’s happened. Say: “This isn’t your fault. I’m here to help you through it.”
4. Decide on next steps together	Work together to decide what action to take — whether that’s saving evidence, blocking someone, reporting content, adjusting privacy settings, or simply deciding nothing further is needed right now. Involve your child in the decision so they feel like a partner, not a bystander. Say: “Let’s figure out together what we should do next — I want your input on this.”
5. Follow up	One conversation isn’t enough. Check in over the next several days and reassure them again that telling you was the right call. Say: “I’ve been thinking about you — how are you doing with everything?”

Sextortion

Sextortion is blackmail using a real or fake image to extort money or more photos — it requires immediate reporting to protect your child from further harm.

Step	What to do
1. Don't pay. Don't comply.	Cooperating or paying rarely stops the blackmail — it often escalates demands. Get help before deciding anything. Say: “We are not paying them. This is a crime, and there’s a way through it.”
2. Block — don't delete	Block the suspect, but do not delete the profile or messages. They’re evidence that can help stop the blackmailer. Say: “We’ll block them now, but we’re keeping everything as evidence first.”
3. Screenshot everything	Capture messages, usernames, the profile, and any payment demands, with timestamps, before blocking. Say: “Let’s save all of this so we have proof of what happened.”
4. Report immediately	Report the account through the platform’s safety feature . File a report with NCMEC’s CyberTipline (cybertipline.org or 1-800-THE-LOST). If images exist, use Take It Down (takeitdown.ncmec.org). Say: “We’re reporting this right now — there are people whose job is to help with exactly this.”
5. Watch for crisis signs	Sextortion can have major, long-term impacts on someone’s mental health. If your child shows signs of panic, hopelessness, or despair, treat it as urgent. Say: “If things feel like too much, we can call 988 right now, together.”
6. Remind them it's not their fault	The blackmailer is to blame — not the child. Even if they made a choice they regret, what’s being done to them is a crime. Say: “You didn’t do anything wrong. They did.”

Sources: NSPCC, UNICEF Parenting, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (missingkids.org/sextortion)