



A program of



# Program Overview for Parents

Ask Me a Question for 8th Grade- How to Stay Safe Online

## Overview:

Online safety is an important topic, especially among young people. In our program, we use developmentally appropriate language to discuss how children can stay safe online. We cover various definitions including online grooming, sexting, digital abuse, sextortion, and red flags. We provide examples of red flags and engage the students in activities to apply the information. We also discuss the importance of setting boundaries, such as being selective about personal information and media, setting time limits on apps, and more. Finally, we provide an online safety plan that involves reporting, deleting, blocking and asking for help when needed. We know this can be a difficult conversation to discuss, so our **24-hour helpline at 301-662-8800** is available for parents and students.

## Important Definitions

- **Online Grooming**- a term used broadly to describe the tactics abusers deploy through the internet to sexually exploit kids and teens.
- **Sexting**- can refer to sending nude or partially nude pics/videos to another person. Having sexual conversations in text messages or online.
- **Digital Abuse**- the use of technology such as texting and social networks/platforms to bully, harass, stalk, and intimidate another.
- **Sextortion**- blackmail or threats to expose sexual images to get you to do something you don't want to do, like send more photos or money.
- **Red flags** are used as a warning of danger. When we're talking about red flags here, we are talking about signs that someone may be using digital means to cause harm to others.
  - Examples of red flags:
    - Asking lots of personal questions
    - Asking for photos
    - Asking you to do favors for them
    - Asking to meet IRL
    - Saying they are your age, but using phrases and asking questions like an adult would use
    - Sketchy profiles - following lots of people, but not many followers; few personal photos or posts; pics may look like stock images

## Ways Children Can Stay Safe in the Cyberspace

1. Keeping personal information private
2. Using strong passwords
3. Thinking before clicking
4. Being smart on social media
5. Talking to an adult
6. Learning about online scams
7. Using secure websites
8. Limiting screen time
9. Staying informed



## Talking Points

Discussing these sensitive topics can be difficult, so here are some tips and talking points to make this easier for you and your child. By having these conversations, it can help to strengthen the parent-child relationship and motivate them to come to you for future encounters.

- **Encouraging open communication with your child-** it's important to keep an open mind when your child wants to share their experiences with you. Avoid being judgmental and creating an environment where your child feels comfortable to express themselves freely.
- **Be prepared-** your child might have been through hard experiences and it may be hard to hear. You can utilize our hotline number at 301-662-8800 or you can scan the QR code below for references and resources.
- **Do your research-** it's important that as the parent you are educated on these topics in case your child may have any questions. To better your understanding of these topics, scan the QR code below for references, resources, and tutorials on how to block other users on social media.
- **Offer reassurance and support-** making sure your child feels secure is essential, so be sure to let them know you're there for them and that coming to you was the right decision.
- **Use a soft tone of voice-** when addressing your child, try to maintain a gentle tone. Sounding accusatory can give the impression that they are in trouble, which may cause them to be defensive and shut down. By adopting a softer tone, you'll create a welcoming environment that encourages openness and honesty. Some examples of this would be, "I am so sorry this happened to you and thank you for sharing this with me" or "Thank you for coming to me, let's figure this out together."

Here are some talking points to have with your child to help the conversation:

- "What social media apps do you have?"
- "What social media platform do you use most often?"
- "Has anyone made any inappropriate comments or made you feel uncomfortable online?"
- "Have you asked or received pictures from anyone?"
- "Are your profiles on social media private or public?"
- "What would you do if you were talking to someone online and they said or did something to make you feel uncomfortable?"
- "What information do you think is best to keep private?"
- "Do you talk to a lot of people online?"

## Where to Find Us!

- **24-Hour Helpline- 301-662-8800**
- [youth@heartlyhouse.org](mailto:youth@heartlyhouse.org)
- [Heartlyhouse.org](https://Heartlyhouse.org)

Scan Below for References, Resources, and How to Help Your Child Block Users on Social Media  
Grab your cellular device, click your camera app and press and hold the QR code to scan.



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