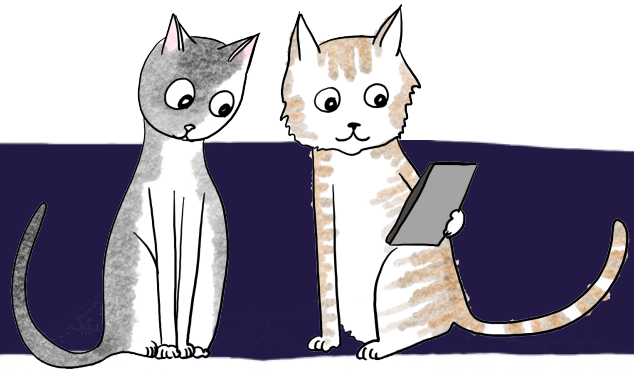


POLICY MAKER RESOURCES ON SEXTORTION.



“

THE KEY TO GOOD CRIMINAL LEGISLATION IS THAT THE END RESULT APPLIES TO REAL-WORLD HARMS WHILE BEING NARROWLY TAILORED TO PASS CONSTITUTIONAL MUSTER, AND FOR THE PUNISHMENT TO BE SUFFICIENT TO DETER THE BEHAVIOR.

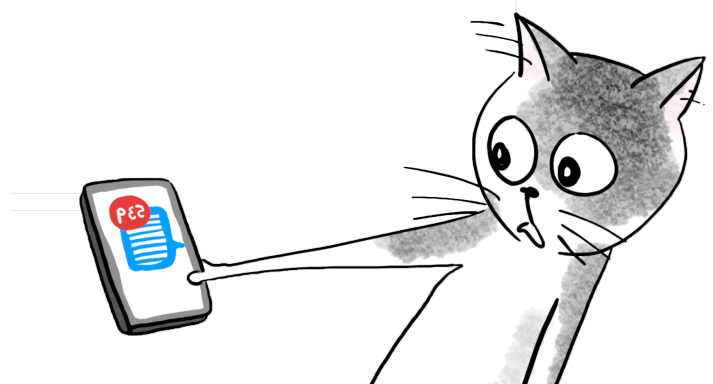
- C.A Goldberg, Victims' Rights Law Firm

POLICY MAKERS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN STOPPING SEXTORTION.

Our kids are trying to navigate community and connection in the digital age, while we're trying to keep up with keeping them safe. Unfortunately, technology moves faster than our laws are able to respond to new abuse trends. By learning about these trends - like sextortion - and including them in your policy agenda, you can help kids feel safe and supported.

01 Understand the issue.

This emerging form of online abuse occurs when perpetrators threaten to expose sexual images of victims in order to make them do something. The cases vary, but across the board perpetrators often attempt to harass, embarrass and control victims. The threats are real - 1 in 8 victims we surveyed moved out of fear for their safety. [Learn more about sextortion and the serious consequences of this abuse.](#)



YOUR NEXT STEPS

LEARN MORE AND IMPROVE THE LAWS THAT KEEP KIDS SAFE

02 Embrace the nuance.

Sextortion is complicated, especially when it involves two or more minors. The most impactful legislation will address the entire ecosystem of abuse and recognize kid's daily access to technology.

Victims should be at the center of any policy. An image that remains available online, is abuse that is ongoing. Teens told us they were scared to report. We can make them feel safe by recognizing sextortion as abuse and providing resources, even if they first willingly provided an intimate image to their eventual abuser.

Law enforcement need training to educate them on the nuances of these crimes, and guidance to focus on context in addition to content.

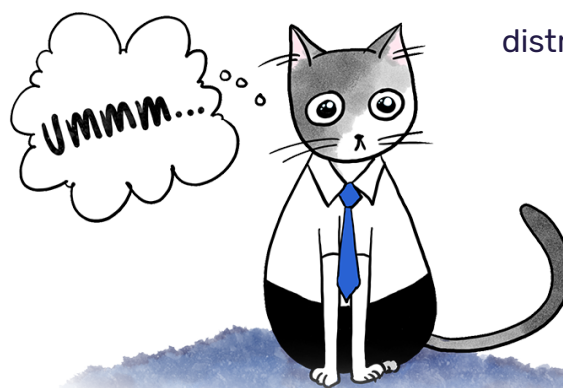
Tech companies don't want their platforms abused. They need Good Samaritan provisions that allow them to report abuse on their site, and should adopt industry best practices to make their platforms safer for kids.

03 Identify policy gaps.

As of September 2017, 38 US states and the District of Columbia have related laws in place (**CA Goldberg Law**) and a federal law was introduced in 2016. These are great first steps. Understanding emerging trends can help these laws become more responsive to kids' needs so that more kids can be safe online.

04 Develop effective laws.

If you're writing new legislation or updating an existing law, include key components necessary for it to be effective. Cyber Civil Rights Initiative has great advice in their **Guide for Legislators**, including guidance on mens rea, intent, types of images covered, first amendment protections, and liability for downstream distributors.



YOUR NEXT STEPS

LEARN MORE AND IMPROVE THE LAWS THAT KEEP KIDS SAFE

05 Put sextortion on your agenda.

Staffers working on technology, violence against women, and law enforcement should learn about sextortion as an emerging form of dating violence. By **investing in addressing sextortion now**, we can protect kids from future abuse.

06 Listen to sextortion survivors.

Those who have experienced sextortion can **provide key insights** into how the crime is being carried out, what they faced when coming forward, and how it has impacted their lives since.

“

I WAS TOLD I COULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING AND DISTRIBUTING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY.

- Female, 14, sextortion survivor

“

SINCE HE HAD ONLY THREATENED AND I WILLINGLY SENT THE PHOTOS, THERE WAS, ALLEGEDLY, NOTHING [POLICE] COULD DO.

- Female, 17, sextortion survivor

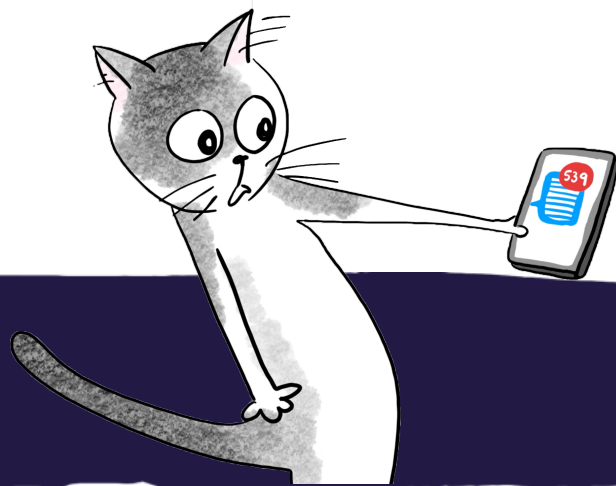
“

EVERY TIME I CALLED TO FILE A REPORT [WHERE THE PERPETRATOR LIVED], THEY SAID THEY COULDN'T HELP ME BECAUSE I'M FROM A DIFFERENT STATE.

- Female, 18, sextortion survivor



HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED SEXTORTION?



“

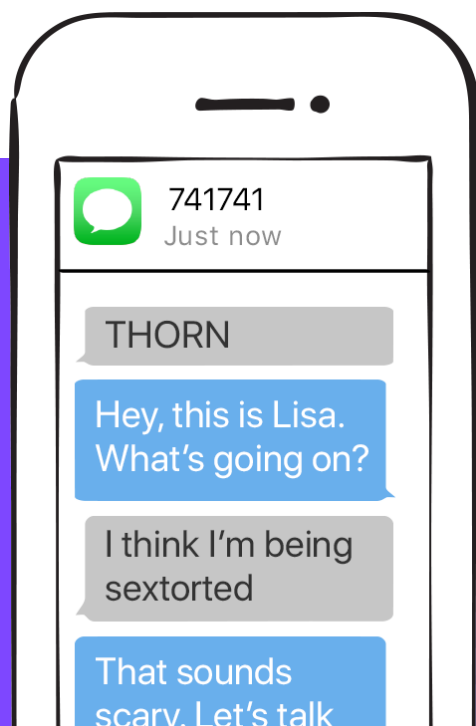
REACHING OUT IS THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO. THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU WANT WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU, THEY MAY BE ANGRY AT FIRST, BUT IN THE END, THEY WILL NOT LOVE YOU ANY LESS... THEY MIGHT EVEN GAIN SOME RESPECT FOR YOUR COURAGE.

- Female, 18, sextortion survivor

THIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT.

Your trust has been broken, and no matter who you are, having your trust broken is unbelievably painful. Dealing with sextortion is scary and overwhelming. It can make you feel alone and like you can't tell anyone, but find someone you're close with and share what's going on. When we talk to people who have gone through this and come out on the other side, they often say, "I wish I had reached out sooner."

TELLING YOUR STORY CAN BE HARD, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT



IF YOU NEED HELP TEXT "THORN" TO 741741

A trained Crisis Text Line counselor will be there to support you anonymously.

GET HELP NOW

YOU ARE NOT ALONE, YOU CAN HANDLE THIS!

01 Take control.

If you're asked to share something that makes you uncomfortable, you have a right to say no, even if you already shared something with them before. If they try to make you feel bad, just remember: **THEY are the ones who are doing something wrong.**



02 Talk with someone you trust.

Addressing your feelings is important, and talking with people who care about you can help, like a close friend, teacher, counselor, or parent. Don't know where to start? You can start a conversation like this:

"There's something going on in my life that I need help with. I'm not sure who to talk to – if I tell you, can you help me figure out what to do?"

Though you may hesitate because the threats seem stronger than the benefit of resisting, here is evidence showing that resisting is usually ideal.

03 Get help. Text "THORN" to 741741.

Confidentially speak with a trained counselor. They will help you move from a hot moment to a cool moment and are trained to support people in crisis. [Learn more about how it works here.](#)

04 Change all of your passwords.

If someone knows your passwords, change them immediately to maintain your privacy. Tools like [lastpass](#) can help keep your privacy, private.

GET HELP NOW

YOU ARE NOT ALONE, YOU CAN HANDLE THIS!

05 Report sextortion.

Tech companies can help remove images and in some cases remove the threats. You can report both the people threatening you, their threats, and the images if they've been shared. This [removal guide](#) has steps to make reports on many major platforms.

You can also call the police. Some victims told us that police resolved the situation, but you should know that if police get involved, you could face some consequences too. It's illegal to share sexual images of minors even if they are of you. Most of the time, we recommend starting off with a trusted adult, and deciding together how to include police.

06 Mention if your age is under 18.

If you are under 18, say that you are under 18 (even if your profile has a different age). It helps companies to know that you're legally still a minor and take more aggressive action. Also, if you are a minor in the images, you can report them to [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#). They work hard to keep young people safe, and will make your report available to law enforcement.

07 Save everything.

This probably feels like the opposite of what you were thinking, but keep everything that is being said to you and that you have said. This will help show someone what happened instead of just relying on your memory. Save texts, pictures, videos, websites, etc. You can take screenshots and save webpages as PDFs. [Save everything just in case.](#)



YOU TRUSTED SOMEONE AND THEY LET YOU DOWN. [DON'T BLAME YOURSELF.](#)

- Female, 17, sextortion survivor

STOP SEXTORTION

BEFORE IT STARTS.

FRIENDS MAKE THE WORLD GREAT.

We are living in a digital world and mostly that's really easy to navigate, but sometimes it's really hard. Things can be weird and confusing, and when it comes to sextortion, we need to look out for our friends, look out for ourselves, and do our best to create digital spaces that we actually want to be in.

01 Tell your friends now that they can trust you.

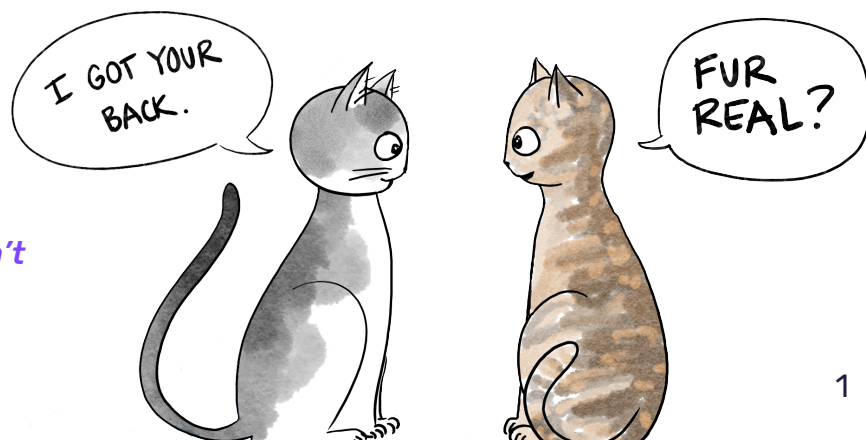
You can even help your friends before they need it, and right now is one of those times. Sextortion is uncomfortable, and people going through it are usually pretty scared to tell their friends. Your friends need to know that you'll be there for them, even if something like sextortion happens. Tell them now – when everything is fine – and as often as possible.

"You need to know that if someone ever tries to use a photo of you to get you to do something you don't want to do – I will be here for you, I won't judge you, and we will figure it out together."

02 Don't forward pics.

This one is really simple – if somebody sends you a sexual image of somebody else, DO NOT share it. It's not up to you to decide who should see their body, so don't forward the image to anyone.

PROTIP: You might be considered legally responsible if you forward these images.



KEEPING SAFE

STOP SEXTORTION BEFORE IT STARTS

03 Understand the issue.

Learning about how sextortion happens and what to do to protect yourself is an important step in preventing it from happening in the first place.

04 Share the cat video.

Did **this video** make you laugh, but also teach you about something serious? Share it with all of your friends so they can be as informed as you are about what sextortion is and how it happens.

IMPORTANT! When you share it, let your friends know that you'll be there for them no matter what.

#noshame #stopsextortion

“ SEXTORTION IS NO JOKING MATTER. AND IF I EVER WENT THROUGH SUCH A THING, I KNOW IT WOULD BE HARD. BUT WITH MY SISTER, I KNOW I WOULD BE ABLE TO GET THROUGH IT.

- Teen Council Member



05 Change passwords often.

If someone knows your passwords, change them immediately to maintain your privacy. Tools like lastpass can **help keep your privacy, private.**

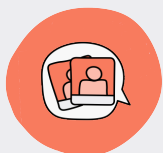
06 Celebrate your friends.

Lift others up. Sextortion can lead to bullying and make people feel really alone. Instead, make your friends feel great by telling them what you think makes them unique and why you love that specific thing. You can also join a community of people fighting online harassment at **HeartMob** and send supportive messages to victims of sextortion and other types of harassment. On the flip side, if you know somebody experiencing sextortion, they can join Heartmob and receive support.

Keeping Your Kids Safe Online

THORN¹
FOR PARENTS

3 Things Parents Need To Know



40%

of teens think it's normal for people their age to share nudes with each other. In fact, kids report being asked for nudes online as young as 9.¹



1 in 3

kids that had shared nudes did so with someone they had never met offline.¹



**MORE THAN
50%**

of kids and parents blame the person in the photo when nudes are leaked.¹

3 Takeaways for Parents

1

START EARLY

The early years, when kids are more open and willing to share, are a critical time to start having an ongoing dialogue about risky situations online. Begin talking about digital safety by age 7, or younger if kids have internet access.

2

LISTEN OFTEN

When parents listen with empathy and understanding about their kids' online life, they build trust while helping them make informed decisions.

3

AVOID SHAME

Parents can help shift our victim-blaming culture by affirming that their children are **NEVER** at fault if someone abuses, betrays or tricks them.

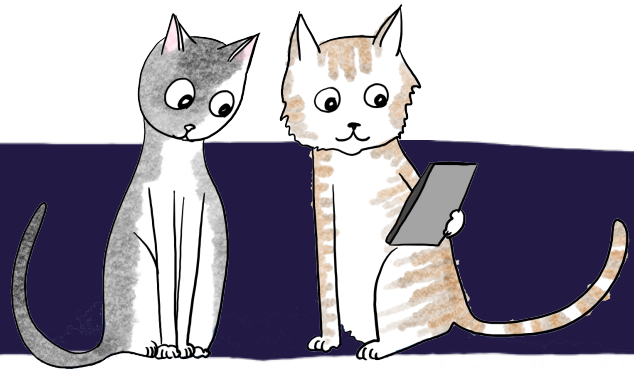
Thorn for Parents is a resource hub to help parents have earlier, more frequent and judgment-free conversations with kids about digital safety.

parents.thorn.org

Thorn for Parents was developed in consultation with child development and safety experts.

¹ Self-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material: Attitudes and Experiences, 2020.

EDUCATOR RESOURCES ON SEXTORTION.



“

WE COULD BRING IT TO THE SCHOOL.

THIS IS TALKING ABOUT AN IMPORTANT TOPIC, BUT IT ISN'T SUPER HEAVY AND WOULDN'T BE BAD FOR THE CLASSROOM. IT WOULD BE VALUABLE FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS.

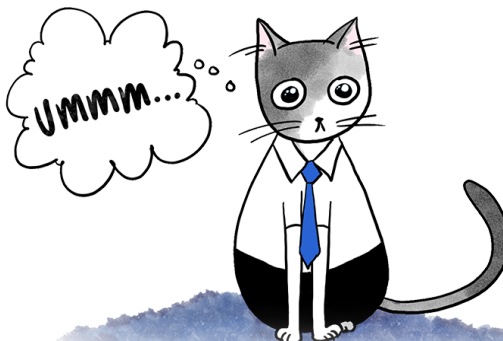
- Teen Council Member

THE CLASSROOM IS A SAFE SPACE, AND WE WANT TO HELP YOU KEEP IT THAT WAY.

You play an important role in students' lives and as new threats emerge, it is important to stay ahead of the trends. Teens clearly told us that you are often the first line of defense.

01 Decide how you will handle disclosures.

As a trusted adult in many students' lives, there is a chance you will come across situations involving images legally considered child pornography, and you are required by law to report certain situations related to child abuse. Before you come across these situations, make sure you understand the laws and your school policies around mandatory reporting. The first priority is always to keep students safe, and that can require different actions depending on the situation.



YOUR NEXT STEPS

LEARN MORE AND TALK ABOUT IT.

02 Develop a script to guide conversation.

We've seen some educators create a script to guide conversations, and keep students aware of the implications of what they're saying. Here's a starting point:

"Thank you for trusting me. I can see you're about to tell me something difficult – I'm here to listen and help, not judge. I want to make sure you're safe, but need you to know that by law I'm required to report to [specific person or entity] if you tell me anything about [mandatory reporting issues]. That said, I will only speak with the people I need to speak with, and we can talk about who those people are. If that is not what you want, let's talk about who else in your life you can go to for help right now."

03 Talk with students about online safety.

We heard from kids that **our video** felt like it belonged in the classroom – bring it there! To really understand how sextortion happens, the severe consequences and barriers to disclosure, **check out our sextortion report and infographic**. Make sure that you explain mandatory reporting laws in your state so that when a student shares their experiences they are not surprised by the outcomes.

PROTIP: Talk with other educators about online safety too. You've just learned a lot of information that would be valuable for other teachers to understand. Plus, the more unified responses are across all educators, the less confused students will be and the more confident you'll be in your decisions.

04 Be there unconditionally.

Kids experiencing sextortion are so scared of getting in trouble. They're worried about being shamed, that they'll get suspended from school, judged by friends or in trouble with the police. These fears can even be suggested by the abuser to maintain control over them, and sadly these things do happen. These fears keep kids silent, and that has led to terrible tragedies. Even if you think they know you'll support them, having these conversations can make a big difference in them sharing their experiences with you when something feels off or goes wrong.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

LEARN MORE AND TALK ABOUT IT.

05 Bring curriculum to the classroom.

Find the one that is right for your class from one of the many options below:

Love146 works on preventing trafficking and sextortion through education. [Find their resources here.](#)

Canadian Centre for Child Protection released a sextortion PSA and developed accompanying lesson plans. [Learn more about their work.](#)

NetSmartz teaches kids how to stay safe online and be good digital citizens. [Get their curriculum.](#)

Audrie & Daisy focuses on sexual assault that was documented and shared. [Watch the powerful documentary and review their lesson plans.](#)

06 Keep up with tech trends.

Talk with students about apps and platforms they are engaging with. Ask them what's cool or new, and why they like it. The more common these conversations are when there is no abuse happening, the easier it will be to understand when something is wrong, and the easier it will be for students to share what's happening.

07 Tell students: don't forward pics.

You can report any nude or semi-nude images to law enforcement or by contacting [CyberTipline](#). Don't forget to tell your students not to forward these images. These may be considered child pornography, and there can be both [legal and personal consequences](#) if they do.

“

REACHING OUT IS THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO. THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU WANT WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU, THEY MAY BE ANGRY AT FIRST, BUT IN THE END, THEY WILL NOT LOVE YOU ANY LESS... THEY MIGHT EVEN GAIN SOME RESPECT FOR YOUR COURAGE.

- Female, 18, sextortion survivor

YOUR NEXT STEPS

LEARN MORE AND TALK ABOUT IT.

08 Understand the issue.

Learning about how sextortion happens and what to do to protect your students is an important step in preventing it from happening in the first place.

09 Learn local laws around the issue.

Learn more about the revenge porn laws in your state. In many cases, these laws will cover sextortion as well. Don't see your state? Call your lawmaker and ask them to consider legislation.

10 Share the cat video.

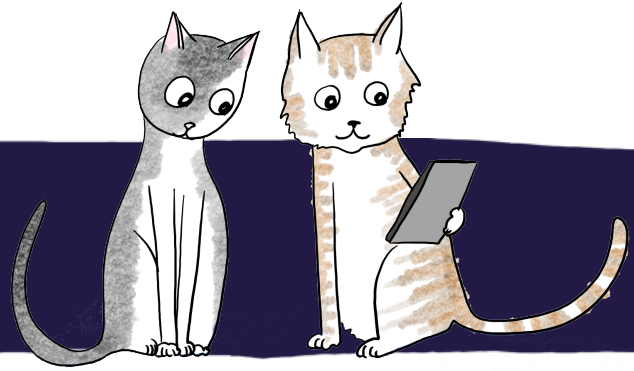
Did this video make you laugh, but also teach you about something serious? Share it with your students and with your colleagues so they can be as informed as you are about what sextortion is and how it happens.

11 Raise awareness.

Consider hosting an anti-bullying assembly at your school, especially one that focuses on help seeking behavior and healthy and unhealthy relationships. Sextortion often results in bullying, and many of the same tactics used to address bullying can be used to address sextortion.



TALK ABOUT SEXTORTION.



“

MY MOM TOLD ME IT WOULDN'T BE THE END OF THE WORLD IF IT DID HAPPEN AND WE WOULD GET THROUGH IT.

- Female, 18, sextortion survivor

THIS IS HARD, BUT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING GREAT BY BEING HERE.

Your children are safer because of your support and guidance through all of life's challenges. Safety in the digital age is new, and chances are your children feel more comfortable navigating digital communities than you do, while knowing less than they need to stay safe. There are a few things you can do to help your child avoid getting into tricky, and sometimes dangerous, situations like sextortion.

TALK ABOUT IT WITH YOUR KIDS, THEN TALK ABOUT IT WITH YOUR FRIENDS.

01 Be there unconditionally.

Kids experiencing sextortion are so scared of getting in trouble. They're worried about shaming their parents, that they'll get suspended from school, judged by friends or in trouble with the police. These fears can even be suggested by the abuser to maintain control over them, and sadly these things do happen. These fears keep kids silent, and that has led to terrible tragedies.

Your fear and frustration is normal, but **they need to know you'll always get through tough situations together.** Even if you think they know you'll support them, having these conversations can make a big difference in them sharing their experiences with you when something feels off or goes wrong.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

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Tech companies can help remove images and in some cases remove the threats. You can report both the people threatening you, their threats, and the images if they've been shared. This [removal guide](#) has steps to make reports on many major platforms.

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04 Consider involving the police.

Some victims told us that police resolved the situation, but you should know that if police get involved, the target of sextortion could face some consequences too. It's illegal to share sexual images of minors even if they are of themselves. Most of the time, we recommend [learning more about available options](#).

05 Save everything.

This probably feels like the opposite of what you were thinking, but keep everything that is being said to the victim and that the victim has said. This will help show someone what happened instead of just relying on memory. Save texts, pictures, videos, websites, etc. You can take screenshots and save web pages as PDFs. [Save everything just in case.](#)

