



MY CHILD HAS AN ONLINE RELATIONSHIP-WHAT NOW?

Think: Protect, Preserve, Report, Heal

Understand also that your child may be embarrassed, ashamed, confused, and may try to delete anything they can to hide what's been happening for lots of reasons. Your child's well being is of utmost importance.

DO NOT

- **DO NOT** freak out. Tell your child you are going to do things to help them and protect them. You have to have a perspective that the relationship could possibly be with another child, an adult that groomed them, a stranger that is exploiting them, or someone they BELIEVE they are truly in love with.
- **DO NOT** delete anything.
- **DO NOT** engage with the account.
- **DO NOT** arrange a meet up.

HANDLING DEVICES & TECHNOLOGY

- Preserve any device that was involved, Take the devices away & do not give any access to the child.
 - Think: did your child use a phone, phones, computer, home tablet, school tablet, any device with internet connection.
- Put those devices on airplane mode.
 - *EXAMPLE – say you find an explicit conversation on your child's phone via Discord. Confiscate the phone, and put it into airplane mode. Also disconnect the device from any devices it's connected to via Bluetooth. This preserves the data on that specific device, even if the child deletes it from a separate device.*
- Change the Wi-Fi password in your home and do not let anyone have the password.

PREVENT CONTACT BETWEEN THE CHILD AND ACCOUNT

- Figure out what recovery profiles are associated with each account.
 - *Example: Your child's Facebook account is associated with a phone number to recover the account. Ensure that it is your phone number, or change it to your phone number.*
 - Please understand this step is extremely important. Many children will try to access their accounts on friends' phones or devices to delete their accounts.
- Collect the apps your child was using, the account/handle names and passwords. Understand your child may have more than just one account for several platforms.



REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS

- Do not allow the child access to the internet – think about literally any device that could connect to the internet & disallow access.
- Change the child’s passwords on third party applications that seem to have been used to be in contact with the alleged perpetrator. This means they can’t use a device outside of your home to continue communication with the perpetrator.
- Discuss the situation with child’s friends’ parents. You do not have to give many details, but be clear it’s important to deny your child internet access if they are under their supervision.
- Call your local law enforcement agency to make a report. Always call the nonemergency line UNLESS you see a message that the perpetrator is coming to your address or there is an active threat.
 - Understand that most likely a patrol officer will come to your home to take the report. OR you can choose to go to the law enforcement agency and make a report there. Take the devices with you that you can.
- In conjunction with the law enforcement agency, report the communication to the online platform itself.
 - *Example: Report a cyber tip to the platform where you found any of the explicit communication.*

KNOW

- Any device that becomes evidence may or may not ever be returned.
- Cases can be suspended for a number of reasons.
- Devices will undergo a forensic, digital interview with your consent.
- Work with your local law enforcement agency/investigator assigned to your case and discuss resources available for your child.
- If your child was in fact in a “relationship” with an adult via online means, your child is a victim of sexual abuse and was most likely groomed, manipulated and or coerced. Be patient with your child as you work through untangling all the pieces. Individual and family therapy would be of great benefit as you navigate your child recovering from this situation.

Meet The Authors



Tony Godwin
Catfish Cops



Brandon Poor
Catfish Cops



Alison Sutherland
Prevention Starts With Parents

