

ONLINE LURING



The Internet and other technology allow teens to quickly connect and communicate with friends, search topics they would otherwise be too embarrassed to discuss with others and experiment with intimacy. While these are all healthy adolescent behaviours, technology does present risks to teens, including that of being lured online.

Online luring is a situation where one person (typically an adult but not always) communicates with a young person through technology (like texting, IM, SMS, etc.) to make it easier to commit a specific sexual offence against that young person. An example of a communication that could qualify as online luring is if the person asks, hints at or tries to convince a young person to create or send naked or semi-naked sexual pictures or videos.

Adults with harmful intentions can use the Internet to prepare teens for future sexual contact. They do this by sending an adolescent sexually explicit material, misrepresenting themselves or attempting to establish a personal relationship with the teen to extort information and/or meet up with them in person.

Live streaming, for example, may be introduced for fun and then progress to persistent requests from the adult for nude or partially nude pictures/videos. Some offenders, under the guise of a romantic relationship, ask a teen to take a sexual picture and send it online. This content may later be used to blackmail or extort the teen (e.g., "If you don't send me more photos, I will send the ones I have to all your friends/family").

Why teens are vulnerable

Teens are vulnerable to being lured or otherwise victimized online as their behaviour is less inhibited when they use technology. They are not developmentally ready to handle the complex situations that can arise online; conversations that may initially appear friendly can quickly become sexual or coercive in nature. Understandably, youth may feel intrigued and flattered by these conversations and continue to engage, believing it to be harmless. In other instances, the young person may believe that they are in a real romantic relationship with the online individual and may wish to meet in person.

It's very important to have conversations with teens about the risks associated with using technology to experiment sexually. Teens will often comply with online threats in an effort to manage the situation on their own since it is often very difficult for them to seek adult assistance if they're embarrassed and/or scared. The desire to meet the individual in person could place the teen in a dangerous situation.



Talking to youth about online luring

- Use real-life examples as your child is less likely to become defensive when a scenario is not about them personally. At the same time, it opens the door for your child to share a similar situation or concern with regard to themselves or a peer.
- Encourage open communication and be conscious of your adolescent's sensitivity to social judgment and societal and peer pressures, as they may be hesitant to share their personal experiences with you.
- Explain that there is no need or urgency to respond to messages of any kind. Teach them not to respond to messages that make them feel uncomfortable and to tell a safe adult about it.
- Discuss how sharing personal issues or situations online with the wrong person could leave someone open to manipulation and mistreatment.
- Talk about how to get out of conversations and/or online relationships when they feel uncomfortable. Discuss direct messaging (e.g., "I don't want to" followed by deleting or blocking the person) and indirect messaging such as making up excuses (e.g., "My mom checks my computer randomly and would ground me").
- Explain that adults should never attempt to become "friends" with or give sexual attention to teenagers. Explain that this is boundary-breaking behaviour and it demonstrates the adult is using poor judgment, making it unsafe to interact with them.
- Discuss that it is illegal to threaten someone online or offline. Explain that threats are often used in an attempt to control youth and get them to comply with unsafe demands. If someone threatens them, they should NOT respond and should tell a safe adult.



Models in image. Intended as illustrative.

