

INVOLVING A SAFE ADULT

Family members can offer you guidance, support and be an important advocate when you are going through a difficult time. While it may be difficult to tell your parents or another safe adult about what happened, even when you know you need to, it is important. Remember, it's your parent's job to help keep you safe so while they may be upset, they should also be concerned about what has happened and help you figure out how to deal with it.

In some situations, there may be reasons why talking to a parent may not be an option. In those situations, speak with another safe adult (like a teacher, coach or relative) about what's happening.

Here are some suggestions about how to let your parents/a safe adult know what's happening:

- Write a note or an email to your parent/a safe adult explaining what's happening and asking for their help.
- Have a friend or a safe adult present with you while you speak with your parents about what happened.
- Have a safe adult (teacher, counselor, another relative) speak with your parents on your behalf. This can give your parents time to process the information without you being in front of them.



Models in image and intended as illustrative.

It may also be helpful to practice what you are going to say before approaching your parents/a safe adult. You can make notes about what you want to say and discuss with a friend. This may help you figure out how to approach and respond to your parents/a safe adult and their possible reaction.

Some ways to approach the conversation include:

- "I made a mistake — I sent a sexual picture of myself to [name] and now others have seen it."
- "I really need your support to get through this."
- "I understand if you are upset. I am trying to figure out what to do — that's why I'm talking to you."
- "I am feeling.....and I don't know what to do about it."
- "I need your help in deciding what to do next and I want you to really hear what I have to say."

Be aware that your parents/a safe adult are likely to feel a wide range of emotions hearing that you have created and shared a sexual picture/video of yourself with peers. This may include disappointment, anger or hurt, as well as concern about what may happen next. It is normal for your family to be feeling these things and more when receiving this type of news. Try your best to remember that in most cases, your family will have a strong reaction because they care about your well-being and safety. For a resource to help your parents navigate through what's happened, please see cybertip.ca/self_peer_exploitation.

If you aren't able to identify a safe adult to talk to, contact a crisis line, like Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868) or find a counsellor in your area (i.e. school guidance counsellor, drop-in counselling). A counsellor may be able to help you make decisions about what to do next.