

CHANGE UNCHAINED

P.O. Box 103 Brewton, AL 36427

855.262.2228

CHANGEUNCHAINED.COM

INFO@CHANGEUNCHAINED.COM



9 WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM ONLINE PREDATORS

All parents need to be concerned about online predators. But kids and teens with learning and thinking differences may be at increased risk. Use these tips to teach your child how to stay safe online.

1. Talk to your child about online predators.

Online predators often target children who are lonely or who have **low self-esteem**. Many kids with learning and thinking differences struggle with social as well as academic skills. That's why it's important to help your child be wary of strangers she meets online. Make clear that some online predators are old men or women pretending to be kids. And some predators are young adults or even teenagers. It may help to show your child news stories about predators who met kids through social networks or gaming platforms.

2. Discuss risky behavior.

All kids are prone to **risky behavior**, but children with learning and thinking differences can be especially at risk. They may want to express their independence and they may be curious, especially about topics like sex or drugs. So they may actually *seek out* online friends with whom they can talk about these topics. Tell your child it's OK to be curious about these things. But explain that discussing these topics online with people they don't know can be dangerous.

3. Spell out what a risky relationship is.

Give examples to help your child understand what a healthy relationship looks like and when she's in danger of being exploited. Talk about unhealthy risks, such as using drugs or sending sexy photos. Make sure she knows that being pressured to keep a relationship secret or to do something that makes her uncomfortable is a sign that she's in a risky relationship that should be ended right away.

4. Talk about the dangers of chat rooms.

One way predators make connections with children is by having private conversations in chat rooms. Talk to your child about why she should never chat privately with someone she doesn't know, no matter how innocent it seems. Kids with learning and thinking

CHANGE UNCHAINED

P.O. Box 103 Brewton, AL 36427

855.262.2228

CHANGEUNCHAINED.COM

INFO@CHANGEUNCHAINED.COM



differences are particularly vulnerable because they may be seeking friendship and acceptance that they aren't finding offline. And they may not know how to get out of unwanted online relationships.

5. Warn your child about online flirting.

Talk to your child about how flirty conversations may seem exciting at first but can quickly escalate and lead to feeling uncomfortable or used. Point out common ways people flirt online. These include talking about what you're wearing (or not wearing) and discussing celebrities' sex lives. Predators are looking for kids who want to talk dirty and share explicit photos or articles. Help your child know what behavior is acceptable

online, including blocking messages from certain users and telling a trusted adult about being harassed.

6. Bring up sexy selfies.

Kids should be warned never to take images of themselves that they wouldn't want seen by all of their classmates. Or their teachers. Or prospective employers. Or anyone else who wasn't the intended recipient. Make it clear to your child that if someone asks for a provocative picture, your child *must* stop typing, log off and tell a trusted adult. Emphasize that this is what your child should do if asked to do *anything* that feels uncomfortable online.

7. Be clear about offline safety rules, too.

Talk to your child about why it's important never to agree to an in-person meeting with someone she only knows online, especially without your knowledge and permission. Explain that meeting up in person could put her in real danger. It's equally important to make sure she knows why she should never post phone numbers, addresses, school name or any other details about herself or family members or friends. Make clear that predators could use this information to find people offline.

8. Consider surveillance software.

No one wants to spy on their children. But if you suspect your child is hiding a risky relationship, you might want to consider installing software to **monitor her online activities** or gain access to instant messages. These methods aren't foolproof, however. That's why your best option is to try to discuss things with your child frankly and frequently.

9. Tell your child that she can always talk to you.

CHANGE UNCHAINED

P.O. Box 103 Brewton, AL 36427

855.262.2228

CHANGEUNCHAINED.COM

INFO@CHANGEUNCHAINED.COM



Make it clear to your child that you want her to come to you with any questions or worries. Let her know that she can tell you anything and you won't get mad even if she broke a rule.

Ref: understood.org

CHANGEUNCHAINED.COM