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It's 3:00. We teach our kids about not talking to strangers on the street. But what about strangers? They meet online. Many parents aren't aware of how easy it is for strangers to engage with our kids online, but it's happening at an exponential rate. One of the internet crimes that has exploded in recent years is called sextortion. Strangers communicating with our kids online, knowing everything about their lives and then extorting them for pictures and money.

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The powerful threats from these predators can lead to anxiety, self-harm, depression, even suicide. Today we bring awareness to this important topic in an effort to inform parents and help save lives. I'm Renee Mannose and this is Town Square. We change topics now to discuss sextortion and the devastating impact it's having on families all across the world. Of course, with topics like this, listener discretion is advised, especially for younger ears.

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But this is a topic that they should be made aware of. Here with us to begin the conversation is Maria. She is the director, editor and producer of sextortion The Hidden Pandemic. Maria, welcome to the program. Thank you for having me. And also with us is Carol Todd, the founder of the Amanda Todd Legacy. Amanda, thank you for sharing with us.

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Thanks for having me. Our phone number is (888) 486-9677. That's 8884 Town square. You can also email us at Talk at Town Square. Talk.org. Maria I'll start with you here. The idea to do this, we talk often with documentary filmmakers. And we often say people don't realize just how much of your life you put into making a documentary. It's a commitment.

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So when you make a commitment to do this, there has to be a strong reason behind it. Tell me a little bit about what led you to this topic. So myself and Steven, the producer of the documentary, appears to, at that time, nine and 12 year old girls. This happened about two years ago when we got this project.

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It started as a human trafficking, documentary in Southern California. And we were considering making it at the beginning of 2020. And then Covid hit and realized we couldn't travel to the West Coast. Are we going to have to stay on the East Coast and rethink this? So we started looking into the case of and researching cyber crimes against children in general.

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And as parents, for our horror, we realized that human trafficking is a crime against children. But sextortion is 1,000% more prevalent and it happens to any child online at any point in the world. And then Covid hit and all children went online and we realized how bad this can be. And then one of the classmates of our daughters was playing a Roblox video game, and sextortion happened to her.

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It didn't go too far, but it traumatized her a lot. And you know, she comes from a very involved family, wonderful parents, and it's just opened our eyes to how vulnerable children are to this crime. And we just felt that we had to do something about this. There are a lot of takeaways from the film, but one thing that stood out to me and you just referenced it there a lot of parents believe.

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Well, you know, the family computer is in the family room so everyone can see what people are doing. Maybe they limit children's cell phone time, but through all those gaming systems, anything that hooks into the internet can afford an opportunity for these predators to move in on your children. And oftentimes these gaming systems are in bedrooms, and you don't realize you think you're doing everything to protect your children.

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But but it's there. Absolutely. And just the sheer number of predators that are now online, sometimes the estimated 1 in 7 children that are online, 1 in 4 children that are online are the target of online predators. Sextortion, which is basically a horrifying statistic to hear for any time. So yes, we even ourselves did not realize two years ago when we started this project how vulnerable children are when they are on devices open to the world.

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Carol, you're with us today because you play a part in this story in what happened to your daughter, and now you're the founder of this organization to remember her and to help other parents and other organizations. When did you first become aware of the concept of sextortion? Hi. I became aware of the concept of sextortion, I guess, after it started happening to my daughter.

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And I became aware of her story in 2010 when the RCMP arrived at my, at my front door. And so, the RCMP being our major police services in Canada, which only shows you that sextortion and these internet crimes don't just happen in one country. It's a global issue that we need to address. Your daughter ended up, being the victim of suicide and led there

by all the disrupt that happened in her life because of this online predators and the behavior that was happening there.

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I guess there has to be a point. And I hope you can talk to parents about this, where parents start to blame themselves, and there's got to be a place where you've got to realize it's not your fault. They are out thinking, you outplaying, you, coming at it from every direction, and that even the best caring families can have situations like this.

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Oh most definitely. And I talked to many parents who whose children have experienced sextortion. Unfortunately, some of those, young people have also died by suicide. And there's survivor's guilt, as there usually is and in maybe any suicide loss of your child, you wonder what you could have done better, if you could have noticed the signs, if you could have taught your child about, how to stay safer on the internet.

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However, knowing the brains of young children and how they aren't fully, formed to make good decisions, until they're much older in their late 20s. Our kids just listen to us, but they don't fully listen to us. But they have that ability to to think that it's not going to happen to them. So we just have to keep that conversation going about, you know, talking to people online and what you should share and what you shouldn't share and give them some modeling of, of questions that other people might ask them so that they are aware of, what's out there?

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It's something that education and, communication needs to be talked about. We need to talk to our teachers, law enforcement people, our community leaders. And we just need to continue to share and have these, these conversations so that we as adults become more knowledgeable so that we can talk to our kids. Right. So, yeah, I know in the documentary sextortion The Hidden Pandemic that Amanda's story is told.

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Carol, can you briefly, run through a little of it so our audience understands what you and your family and Amanda went through? Sure. In 2010, as I said, the, police arrived at my door to tell us that Amanda had been, an image of hers had been shared online. An intimate image, which is now known as sextortion.

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Sextortion. Ten years ago. 12 years ago wasn't really a word. And it is now. And so fast forward in that, Amanda's online offenders continued to harass her and, ask her to create more videos and send you more pictures. And and she refused. And he went after he targeted her and sent, what he had to her friends and her family.

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In a period of two and a half years, he kept up with the harassment, which then led to bullying and cyberbullying by her peers. The ones that change or the ones that judge or, it peeled away her her, sense of being so that she was she developed mental health anxiety, depression. She couldn't go out. Right.

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And things like that. She died by suicide in October of 2012. Ten years ago. Exactly. Almost like October 10th was her 10th year date. Five weeks prior to that, she put out a black and white YouTube video that has gone viral across the world, sharing her story about her offender, about her bullying, her cyberbullying, her mental health.

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And I would think that it's probably been viewed like maybe 45 million times around the world, globally. Fast forward again. After she passed away in 2014, we got a I got a phone call that an offender had been caught. And, the offender had also been offending other young girls and, gay adult males in the Netherlands.

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And so he was arrested in April of 2014. He was arrested in January 2014 and charged in April 2014. There was a Dutch trial in the Netherlands for him, where he about ten years and eight months. For his victimization of others. Canada decided to, have a separate trial for him and over here and he is the first sexual online offender of exploitation and sextortion and child pornography that's been extradited from another country into Canada to stand trial.

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I don't believe that in the United States it has that has ever been done either. Right. And so set the precedent of a legal stage. It took eight years for that trial to come to fruition. It just happened this past June of 2022. And then in August, nine weeks later, he was he was convicted guilty of five charges extortion, luring, criminal harassment, two charges of child pornography.

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And then just a week ago, he was sentenced to 13 years, which may sound low to you in the United States. But in Canada, 13 years for one victim and five charges is huge. And now it has set legal precedent for other cases that may go forward with, offenders that do the same thing to children.

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So we set the bar high. And that, in a nutshell, is Amanda's story. Does that sentencing give you and your family any solace, any relief? It does only. But he's going to be really extradited back home to the Netherlands. And I understand that according to Dutch laws, there is a sentence conversion hearing which will convert his sentence down.

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So that doesn't give me any any hope and peace, because if he gets out sooner, we're letting another person, we're letting a person who is at risk to re-offend to go back into society. So that upsets me, right? Yeah. Yeah. When I hear that, Maria, I think to myself, when you talk about the sheer number in the film of people that a single predator can affect can go after at any given time, they, they work massive networks of kids.

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Absolutely. In case the true crime case of the creature in the film, aside from Amanda's story, the predator has 300 victims. It's not uncommon, from working with the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice. Most of the time, either one victim or none of the victims come forward. And when they recover one of the victims, they cover 200, 300, 400 victims across the country and across the world.

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It was pandemic, and we didn't realize the extent of it until we started researching, getting, access to the unsealed cases from Department of Justice and Homeland Security to Maria you you share Carroll story and as you said, other stories in it. Is it hard, even at this point, to get the parents and the survivors to talk about the situation?

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Is it hard to get those that were victimized to talk about it? Even today? Actually, I was surprised by sheer number of victims that wanted to tell their story, to take that power back. Basically, did you hear voices of the voiceless? And we just finished the 20 city tour across the country, where in every single city we went to, people stood up and said, what's happening to me?

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That's happening to my best friend? We have kids stand up and show off Snapchat with predators who were trying to target them and go on them. We have parents stand up and say, we have a 17 year old son who just told us yesterday that this happened to him. Well, just by that small sample we screened at home between 5 and 6 to between 5 and 6000 people.

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Every single audience had somebody that just happened to what is happening to right now. Well, I want to thank both of you for coming and sharing your story with us. Of course, Maria, thank you for sharing the film and, Carol, the work you're doing. Thank you so much. You're very thank you for having us. Maria Maria Peek is the director, editor and producer of Sextortion The Hidden Pandemic.

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And Carol Todd is the founder of the Amanda Todd Legacy. Our phone lines are open for your stories. Questions? Comments at (888) 486-9677. That's 8884 Town Square. Now joining the conversation on what law enforcement is doing to combat these crimes and the mental health stigma attached to it and the impact it's having on our children. First, Erin Burke, who is the unit chief of child exploitation Investigation Unit at Cyber Crimes Center and Homeland Security Investigations.

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Erin, welcome to the program. Thank you so much for having me, I appreciate it. And a regular contributor on our show, psychologist Doctor Jeff Temple, who is the vice dean of Research and scholarship at the School of Nursing, the John Sealy Distinguished Chair in Community Health, and the director of the center for Violence Prevention at Utmb. The doctor, Jeff, welcome back to the program.

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Always nice to be on with you, Ernie. Thank you. This is town square. I'm Ernie news. And as a reminder, the phone lines are open. 88848696778884 Town square. Aaron, I want to start with you. When we talk about the sheer number of victims that this crime has and the ease at which these perpetrators are able to build these networks.

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Is there a way to stop this? So that's the that's the number one question. And at the terrible answer, because the the access to the internet has just made this tight, this type of crime and all exploitation crimes just explode. It would take a massive effort between education of children, education of parents, mass efforts by law enforcement and technology companies to even stop this.

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But the problem is, you know, initially, these folks who are predators, they're really good. They're not doing anything illegally until they actually push forward. So they get online and they befriend these kids. And none of that is something we can't regulate that. So, you know, so much of the actions that these predators are taking are not actually illegal.

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So we can't just shut them down immediately. So, you know, I, I don't see this going away anytime soon. And I actually see it getting worse and worse, unfortunately. What is your advice to parents. And and we'll go deeper in the next segment. But right now to help start making sure their children are safe. So the number one thing I want parents to do is really paying attention to what their kids are doing online, and I don't mean installing some app that's supposed to keep your kids safe online, because honestly, in these types of crimes, that won't work.

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Parents need to pay attention to every device their children is using. They need to look at the apps that are on there. They need to make sure they understand how those apps work. They need to know if there's messaging and photo capabilities. And get on there and look at the friends list, because the predators are going to get into those friends list like they're somebody, you know, who was at the school or lived down the street or lives in the next town over.

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You really need to go through those those lists and say, hey, do you actually know this person in real life? And are you sure? And let's confirm it. And and don't let your kids be friends with strangers online. We wouldn't do that in real life. I always give the analogy that, you know, back in the day when we always thought there were predators in in malls or at

parks, you'd never let your kids go to a park where thousands and thousands of strangers are just hanging out.

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Right? You knew that was dangerous. When you give children access to the internet, there's thousands and thousands of predators on there, and we're just not doing enough. So it's it's really paying attention. It's paying attention, making sure kids aren't deleting chats aren't deleting, you know, images, and then having the conversation, explaining to them that this is what is happening online.

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It's happening across the world. And those dangers are not going to be a parent. You know, it's not obvious who these predators are. So they really need to sit down and talk about the dangers and do something and make sure they look at those devices so they can actually try to make sure their kids are being safe, because we can't leave it up to the kids alone, because their brains are just not fully developed enough to be able to see the things that we as adults can see as we go to break.

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Give me a horrific statistic here. One out of how many children is probably touched by this crime. You know, I don't have an official statistic, but based on seeing the number of cases that are coming in, I used to say it was probably 1 in 10, and now it's probably more like 1 in 5 because. Yeah. And again, that's not official.

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That's just from what we're seeing. I mean, but it just shows you how pervasive this is. It is so pervasive and it's becoming I mean, every month I see statistics and they're going higher and higher and higher of referrals. And those are the people that are actually, you know, getting referred. Can you imagine how many children are out there that aren't doing anything they haven't told anybody?

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And they're just sitting getting tortured by this. We're going to take a quick break. Right now we are talking with Aaron Burke, Homeland Security Investigations and psychologist, Doctor Jeff Temple and Doctor Temple. You're going to be in the spotlight when we come back. So don't feel unloved at this point. Our phone number for your comments and questions, your stories is (888) 486-9677.

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That's 8884 town square. Remember you can also interact with us and follow us on Twitter using our town square. Talk to ensure you never miss an episode. Remember to subscribe to the Town Square with our Name News podcast wherever you get your podcasts. This is Town Square on your NPR station news 88 seven. I'm Ernie the News. We'll be right back.

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This is town square. I'm Ernie and tomorrow show. With Halloween right around the corner, the monsters come alive. We'll talk with the actors who played some of the most famous monsters in entertainment. The original Jason from Friday the 13th, Michael Myers from Halloween, and Butch Patrick. Eddie Monster himself. That's tomorrow at 3 p.m. right here on Town Square.

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You can also send your questions to them starting now with Talk at Town Square, Talk Talk today and a much more serious note. We're bringing awareness to sextortion and how you can keep your family safe. Of course, with topics like this, listener discretion is advised, especially for younger ears, but this is a topic that they should be made aware of.

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Aaron Burke is with us, investigator of cyber crimes and child Exploitation for Homeland Security, investigates, and Doctor Jeff Temple, director of the center for Violence Prevention at Utmb health. Our phone line is 88848696778884 Town Square. Okay, doctor Jeff, I said I would get to you after the break. So here we go. I have to assume that there are people out there that are thinking to themselves, or my children wouldn't send explicit photos.

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My children wouldn't send nude pictures. This would not be a problem in our home. We raised our children well. Your response? Well, first, thank you so much for covering this topic and I can never feel unloved. By you, Ernie. You know, I was really glad that you had, Carol Todd on Amanda's mom. I have been using her, case as an example for the past several years when I give talks on sexting and digital citizenship.

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And for your audience, if you haven't watched her YouTube video, Amanda Todd's, please do yourself a favor and go watch it. I think it really illustrates the enormity of this problem. We will link it on our website if folks are looking for it at Town Square. Talk, talk. Okay. Continue. Yeah, absolutely. And so, you know, I've done research on this now for the past ten years.

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And what we find pretty consistently is about a quarter, to half of all adolescents have, sent a naked picture of themselves to someone else. And those numbers go up as adolescents increase in age. By the time they're 18-19, it's going to be over. Half of teens have sent a naked picture of themselves to others. And, so and the chance that your kid, has been asked to send a naked pictures of themselves if if she or he is 17 years old or something around there, it's close to 100%.

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So then help me understand this. I know some parents will think, well, no, that's the moral breakdown, and kids aren't doing it. My children wouldn't do that. And then children are not going to talk about having done it, even if their parents ask, how do you open communication enough that your child feels safe telling you? Because I've got to assume the majority of this happens because of embarrassment, because they think they did the wrong thing and there's nowhere to turn.

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Unknown

And as soon as a child feels that way, the predator is sunk in. A vast majority of sexting is completely benign. And, and I know that parents and listeners are probably going to be shocked that I said that. But for the most part, teens who sex, you know, again, if you if you take these numbers, the 25% to 50%, you're talking about millions and millions of kids and mostly goes unheard of.

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Unknown

So as scary as the situation is with sextortion and Amanda Todd, it is relatively rare, versus how many people actually sex. So, you know, for the most part it is not something to worry about. But, how I like to look at it is to really look at it, compare it to offline behavior. And you know that the world's online and offline worlds are increasingly blurred.

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And, much like Erin talked about with, you know, going to a park with a thousand strangers, what we see is with, the online world and things like sexting when it's done younger, just like when sex is, you know, people have early sexual debut when it is unwanted, when it's coerced, when it's, non-consensual, and when it's shared, that's when it's dangerous.

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Unknown

And it's just the same as sexual, sex in real life, right? If it's unwanted, if it's coerced, if people talk about it after it's done, that's when it has its effects. And that's the same with sexting. So I don't think that, you know, parents should expect kids to talk about sexting, just as they probably don't talk about sex very openly.

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But if you're a parent, you know, and you're listening to this show right now, talk to your kids about healthy sexuality and digital citizenship and how the online world is very similar to the offline world. But I guess also, I'm going to go back to my initial question to you, though, is how do you create an environment where a child knows they can come to you and say, I did something wrong and I need help?

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Unknown

Instead of feeling like they've done something wrong, they need to hide it. Gotcha. So, And I apologize for not answer. No, no, no, I mean, you gave me a lot of great info along the way. Well, I think the the disconnect where where I saw it is that sending a naked picture is not to a consensual boyfriend or girlfriend.

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If you're 17. I don't know if that's necessarily wrong. Per se, but if you get into the situation where you're being manipulated and abused and yeah, you want them to tell someone, they probably won't tell an adult or a parent, they'll probably tell a friend. So what we need to do a better job of doing is educating our kids about healthy relationships and about, help seeking not only for themselves, but how they can help their friends.

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Now to your question. Finally, specifically, I you know, it's not going to be a one off. It's not going to be a birds and bees talk. It's going to be an ongoing conversation that starts when they're young, that is, talking about, healthy relationships and healthy sexuality and, and also modeling healthy relationships and that you can, you know, if you're husband that you do openly talk about your feelings with the, with your wife and the kids get to model that and see that.

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Aaron, let me come back to you on this too. I'm assuming that the only way that these predators really can win is because of shame, because people are embarrassed and worried and shamed for what do you recommend. So again really good question. And the the hard thing is this traditionally we parents have always said do not ever send a picture.

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Unknown

Do not ever send a picture. That's the worst thing you can do, right? So now we're asking them to say, hey, if you do, it's okay, come to me. And we really have to change that mindset. You know, that's the problem. It's like, no, we have to get them to understand they're the victim. So if that child sends a naked picture of themselves to a predator again, they don't know it's a predator.



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Unknown

They think it's somebody their age. They think it's somebody who's interested in them. If they do that, it's not their fault that predator manipulated and coerced them into doing it. Right. So if we can get that that message out there. Yeah. And I agree, you have to talk about all of these things. We can no longer pretend that our kids are not going to be sending naked pictures.

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So, again, we didn't grow up with with cameras, just taking pictures and taking more sexualized pictures is becoming commonplace. I mean, seven year olds have pictures and are taking selfies daily. I mean, it is becoming very, very commonplace for images to be everywhere of our kids. So the idea of, you know, taking more and more sexualized images, we see it all over Instagram, all over Facebook, all over everything.

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It's kind of like not a big deal to kids anymore. So we have to change. As adults. We have to change our mindset and say, hey, it's not recommended. These are the reasons why you shouldn't send, you know, naked pictures of yourself. They can end up, on websites. They can end up being passed around. You don't want that.

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Unknown

But if you do and you get into a situation where somebody is manipulating you, causing you, hurting you, there are ways to help. So that's what it is. There are ways to get those images down. There are ways for law enforcement to make sure that person doesn't hurt children again and hurt you ever again. So it's those kind of conversations.

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Unknown

It's saying, hey, this maybe wasn't a great decision by you, but the predator is the one who did something wrong. So we have to kind of change that whole narrative of how we talk about, you know, right and wrong on the internet. I was watching the film sextortion last night, and I was fascinated as once it became known that this was happening, that the, the, the policing organization, I remember which group it was in, the film were able to spring into action, and they were able to take on the identity of the child and go after the predator and how they built the case against them.

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Unknown

There's a lot that can be done. But the first step is law enforcement needs to know what's happening, correct? Erin. That's absolutely it. And we have parents that are trying to go on there and trying to communicate and try to like, act as cops. That's really well being. And it's well, it's well-meaning, but it's not the right thing.

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Unknown

You know, we have to get law enforcement. We know how to do everything. So it's legally sufficient. And we know, you know, most parents are like, I just want to I want to throw away the computer. I want to throw away the lab, the cell phone, the laptop. Don't do that. That's what we need to go ahead and go after these people.

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Unknown

But yeah, we can respond very quickly. HCI has the ability to respond and act and go after these guys really quickly. So, you know, we really encourage anyone if you find out this is happening, just stop, you know, take the devices and go to law enforcement. Our phone line here is (888) 486-9677. Chris has been on the line a little bit waiting to chat with us.

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Chris, what's on your mind today? All right. Oh, can you hear me? Yes, we can. Oh. I'm sorry. I was just calling to find out if there are any steps being taken, nationally or internationally, to, tag these in there and have them for sure, or just kind of expose them to where, you know, they can be monitored or follow.

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Unknown

There are restrictions be placed on them. Thank you. Chris. Erin, any kind of national international registry. So I mean, if if a person gets convicted of, you know, certain crimes, they're going to be placed on, you know, a certain national registry sex offender registries. But for the people who are out there actively doing it, if law enforcement is able to recognize and find a target, we're going to go after them.

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So and we do work with their international partners. I'm meeting next week with a bunch of international partners talking about sextortion and other online crimes. We work together and, you know, we share information with all of our international and domestic partners about targets. So, you know, there may be you know, I don't know if they talked about it earlier, but one predator usually has lots and lots of victims.

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Unknown

And those victims are spread throughout the world. So we definitely have to take an international and a cooperative approach to go after them. And we are actively doing that every single day. Doctor Jeff, back over to you. We were talking about Amanda Todd, and we had her mother on a little earlier, as you mentioned, and what happened to Amanda seemed to happen after the fact of the of the initial, sextortion that occurred with her.

00;30;53;08 - 00;31;19;28

Unknown

Your advice to parents on how to recognize these signs and how to intercede before it gets to the point that it happened with Amanda? Well, I'm so glad that you have Erin on, by the way, because she has explained much more succinctly than I would than I tried to. So she is great. And, thank you, Erin. And, also say just one quick thing is that, you know, about the person who sends their photograph not being the victim.

00;31;20;00 - 00;31;38;11

Unknown

We see the double standard as well. That we see in real life with girls are the ones who are labeled as sluts and whores and not the guys. And often what happens at schools, and I'm sure Erin can attest to this, is that, you know, they'll find a picture of a girl on a guy's phone, and then she'll be the one who gets in trouble.

00;31;38;18 - 00;31;53;16

Unknown

And that's really backwards. And so something we need to think about and change as a society is, is to this double standard that we imposed on women and girls. Before you answer my question, I do want to jump in here. You brought up a really great point that I don't think we addressed yet, and Erin can probably attest to this too.

00;31;53;16 - 00;32;14;12

Unknown

This doesn't just happen to our girls. It's happening to our boys, too. And that these boys, I've seen stories online also about boys who have been so, shamed by what they said, that they have gone the same route that Amanda went. We definitely are seeing that. And we're just we're seeing the evolving methods that these folks are using.

00;32;14;12 - 00;32;37;07

Unknown

You know, traditionally, sextortion has been all about getting those embarrassing photos and then extorting the child for, you know, more photos and more acts, you know, more terrible things. Now, a large amount of boys are being, you know, basically extorted through for financial means. So we have actual organizations that are doing just like the old school lottery scams.

00;32;37;07 - 00;32;55;02

Unknown

If people are familiar with those, it's now the same thing. These organizations are targeting men or boys and girls, but a lot of boys and doing the same thing. And once they get those embarrassing, you know, pictures, now they're asking for money and they're asking for gift cards and different things. And the amount of boys that that is having to do is definitely increasing.

00;32;55;02 - 00;33;17;15

Unknown

But yeah, it is it. It's a universal crime against boys and girls in this world. Doctor Jeff, I'm sorry I cut you off. I you were about to answer a question earlier. No, I love it. Yeah. So you know, what I've talked about on this show many times is when we, you know, when our kids experience some sort of stress, whether it's extortion or anything else, what we're going to start to see is behavioral changes.

00;33;17;15 - 00;33;42;15

Unknown

So depression and anxiety that they're not going to be as interested in doing things as they used to increasing substance use, locking themselves away in the room or less interaction, you know, all that sort of stuff. Maybe in younger kids, more aggressive behaviors like bedwetting. So all that sort of stuff that we'll see. And, you know, going back to Amanda Todd, though, and I would love to hear Aaron's perspective on this is they did everything.

00;33;42;15 - 00;34;05;28

Unknown

They moved schools, I think 3 or 4 times. And the predator kept following them and following them. So even, the most well-intentioned, most proactive steps sometimes can't, interfere with this sort of crime. Erin, you're going to add to that. Yeah, absolutely. I agree, and I think that's where law enforcement and legislatures need to step up.

00;34;05;28 - 00;34;25;04

Unknown

We need to have more rights for victims. We need to have more services for victims. And and that's across the board. It's Amanda Todd's story is horrific. And all of the stories that we're hearing about with these folks that just can't get past that, these kids just can't, and they're in these terrible positions. We need to go proactively out to do that.

00;34;25;10 - 00;34;42;04

Unknown

And then afterwards, once somebody has been victimized, we need to do everything we can, and that's on us, that's on law enforcement and that's on our social services and that's on our legislature. We need to make sure that every law is passed, that is, that can help us protect these children and that we can go after these folks.

00;34;42;04 - 00;35;02;20

Unknown

Because, again, the laws that we're going by, a lot of them haven't caught up to today's technology. So the cyberstalking and the things that these folks are doing, although not defined as illegal in some places, they're devastating. So we need to make sure that we catch up. You know, the laws in the United States, Canada, around the world really do have to catch up with the technology that's available to predators.

00;35;02;22 - 00;35;18;02

Unknown

I do want to also mention that oftentimes these predators, they will pose as either a man or a woman, depending on the child that they are going after. So don't think just because you have a boy that if a man is doing the predators or the predators, if the man is the predator, that he isn't posing as a woman.

00;35;18;02 - 00;35;43;24

Unknown

To also entice this kind of behavior quickly before we run out of time, we've only got about 30s left. Doctor Jeff, we had a question from Nicole about can you provide tips for parents on how to address the topic with their children? Yes, I can actually, I could do a little bit better than that. If you if you Google search temple and primer on sexting, it'll tell you about how to talk to your parents about, this very topic.

00;35;43;27 - 00;36;00;22

Unknown

I also think just have the conversation. The more you talked to better, we will put that link also on our page at Town Square talk.org. That music tells me we are out of time. I want to thank you both for joining us, Erin. Thank you so much. And Doctor Jeff, always a pleasure. Thank you. Thank you so much.

00;36;00;23 - 00;36;21;05

Unknown

Thank you. Aaron Burke is a unit chief child exploitation investigative unit at Cyber Crimes Center with Homeland Security Investigations. Psychologist doctor Jeff Temple is the vice dean of research and scholarship at the School of Nursing and the John Sealy Distinguished Chair in Community Health, and the director of the center for Violence Prevention at Utmb health.