

Conversation Starters for Coaches & Teachers

You may be the adult a student trusts most. Use your platform — a team meeting, a classroom moment, a one-on-one check-in — to spread the word before a crisis hits.

OPENERS BY SCENARIO:

MOMENT

WHAT TO SAY

PRESEASON MEETING/START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

"Before we get going, I want to take a few minutes to talk about something important that's affecting students. There's a scam, called sextortion, where someone online pretends to like you, gets you talking, then blackmails you over a picture. They specifically target athletes like you. If you're ever targeted, I want you to know you can come to me — you won't be in trouble, and we'll handle it together."

INTEGRATE THE TOPIC INTO A HEALTH OR DIGITAL SAFETY LESSON

"Here's one specific scam to know about. It's called sextortion. Someone poses as a peer online, gets you talking, then asks for a picture. The second you send it, they threaten to send it to everyone you know unless you pay. Recognizing this pattern is how you beat it."

CHECK IN

"You've been somewhere else the last few practices — distracted, quiet. I'm not asking you to tell me right now. I just want you to know: whatever's going on, especially if it's something online, you can come to me and we'll figure it out together."

AFTER A TOUGH NEWS STORY

"Some of you may have seen that story about a student who committed suicide after being blackmailed online. I want to say this as a team: that's not rare, and it could be any one of you. If you're ever blackmailed, you can come to me. We will figure out the next step."

RED FLAG REMINDERS

"Before we get on the bus — a reminder. Hotel downtime, being bored on your phone at night, that's exactly when these scams happen. If anyone messages you tonight to send a picture, that's a red flag. Come find me, any time, even if it's late."

IF A STUDENT CONFIDES IN YOU

- | Stay calm and reassure them first: “I’m glad you told me. This is not your fault, and we’re going to get you help.”
- | Don’t investigate it yourself. Don’t ask to see the image or the messages — that’s not your role, and it can retraumatize the student.
- | Encourage them to stop communicating with their blackmailer and to preserve the chats and images on their digital devices.¹
- | Loop in your school counselor or organization administrator immediately and follow your school’s/organization’s reporting protocol.
- | Point them to help: the NCMEC CyberTipline (CyberTipline.org), Take It Down (takeitdown.ncmec.org), and 911 or 988 if they are in danger.
- | Don’t promise total secrecy — promise to handle it carefully and keep them safe.

SOURCES

. ¹OJJDP, Sextortion Victim Resource Sheet — ojjdp.ojp.gov/publications/sextortion-victim-resource-sheet.pdf