

Digitally Empowering Young People: The Podcast S1 E6 – Expert advice for young people featuring Voice Box

This final episode is aimed at children and young people. It features advice from all our contributors and Voice Box a social enterprise run by young people that helps create a space for young people to speak directly to decision-makers.

BR

Bibizadeh, Roxanne

Welcome back to a new podcast series that aims to draw awareness to the social and digital emergency of self-generated child sexual abuse imagery.

Anonymous young people

This podcast is for young people, with the help of Roxanne, a group of experts with professional and lived experience have recorded some smart advice. It features advice from all previous podcast guests. The advice is to help us think twice before sharing sexual content of ourselves or other young people like taking nude photos, videos, or live streaming. It is also reassuring to know help and support is out there if you need it when things don't go to plan. Knowing about this stuff helps keep us safe.

Internet Watch Foundation:

R

Hi, my name's Rosa.

I'm a senior analyst at the Internet Watch Foundation and every day I see examples of self-generated child sexual abuse material that means images and videos that children have taken themselves.

But then those images have often got out of their control and been spread and shared.

My advice is that it is normal to be thinking about sex and it's normal to be socializing and experimenting online and taking a nude image of yourself or making a nude video for someone doesn't feel wrong in the moment.

But I just want to highlight that the risk can come afterwards when that image or that video is suddenly out of your control.

So it is really worth thinking twice about what you're taking and who you're sending it to, it might never go away, or it might be very difficult to completely get rid of it from the Internet.

And sextortion is a term you've probably heard of, and it is happening now online to children and often without mercy.

The predators who are doing this are ruthless.

So if it happens to you if someone asks for a nude and you give it to them and then they ask you for money or ask you for more, or threaten you, then please talk to someone.

There is help out there, there are resources to help you on IWF's website you can go to iwf.org.uk/resources/sextortion and you will find some resources on there including report removed to help get images removed from the Internet if they appear online, don't suffer in silence.

There are agencies like the police, like ChildLine, who are able to have these conversations with you.

You don't have to suffer in silence.

People know this is going on and there's support out there for you.

If this has happened to you.

Voice Box - Natalie Foos

R

My name is Natalie Foos, and I'm the Director at VoiceBox, a social Enterprise and content platform that helps ensure that young people's voices are heard and valued. And I'd like to say that if you're pressured into sending nude photos know that it's not your fault. Talk to a teacher a parent or Guardian about what happened. They will be able to help. You can also report to places like CEOP the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency. It might feel like your world is crashing down you may feel powerless in this situation, but you do have some power. You can reach out for help, and this is something that you can move forward from with time. I would like to share an anonymous story from a young person who has experienced this in the past.

They said a few years ago. I got sextorted on Instagram. I chatted to someone on Instagram for a good few days and then got to sending nude images after I sent images of myself the person started demanding a thousand pounds or else they were gonna start sending my nudes to my followers. I was so overwhelmed, and I panicked, and I paid. And that was the single worst moment in the whole ordeal because that was a moment they had power over me. Because afterwards I told my family they called me down made me see sense and advised me to block and report the Instagram account and the phone number and not to worry about it. And for a while, they did contact me practically every day bombarded me with messages and photos telling me to pay even more but at that point, my family knew and I told everyone that I message on Instagram to block and report if they ever got a sort of similar message request. And I instantly blocked any new numbers they contacted me with.

The more they contacted me the more I realized how powerless they were. My best advice is to not let them scare you that's where all their leverage comes. Not from the photos they have of you, but of your fear of what they might do. I'm in University now and have moved on from this whole situation. Occasionally, this person will try and message me from another account. But every time I do, ironically I become less concerned and more confident as I know they no longer hold that power in the situation. They're just begging me at this point. If this happens to you, it's imperative to let someone know don't send any money and don't face this situation alone.

As that young person shared that was a few years ago, and they're at University now. It's something that they were able to move past with some support, and you can too.

Kent County Council:

My name's Rebecca Avery.

I'm the training development manager and online safety lead for the education safeguarding service in Kent County Council I support schools, early years settings in making sure that children young people are as safe as they can be online.

What I'd like young people to know about these issues is how easy it is for people to get it wrong, that children and adults make mistakes when it comes to online relationships, and that's OK. It's about how we learn from them.

If we do get something wrong, it's that we learn from that, we pick up, we make a change, whether that's our change, whether that somebody else's change.

It's also important that young people know that the law isn't there to punish them. The law around images is there because sadly, there are adults who want to abuse and exploit children. It shouldn't be used as a threat, and it shouldn't be there to punish them. It's there for protection

Children and young people aren't alone in this. It might feel like that they might feel that they can't talk to anybody in real life like a teacher, or maybe they don't feel they can talk to their parents or carers. But there are places like ChildLine or the

NCA CEOP and they can be really helpful resources if you are dealing with these issues and you want to speak to somebody about what you can do.

It can get better. It can be something that's really overwhelming, particularly when you might think that you are the one that's being blamed for this. It's not your fault. You shouldn't be blamed for these things happening to you. It's very much about focusing on how we can make sure that you are safe. Sometimes young people are told messages around 'Once you sent an image, you've got no control over it', and whilst technically yes, that might be the case, there is an awful lot that now can be done in order to try and get those images taken down. For example, resources like the ChildLine and the IWF report remove tool are really useful resources that can help young people feel empowered and actually take control of what can feel like quite a scary or out of control situation.

The other thing I'd like young people to know or think about is we are probably the best, or rather you are probably the best solution to this and the relationship you have with your peers talking to each other are essential when it comes to dealing with the outcomes or the situations when it comes to image sharing.

It's about us being a positive or a good influence. If we see something that's not right or we see somebody being pressured to do something that we stand up for that person and say that's not the right thing, that's not OK, so that we can actually make those safer choices together.

Voice Box - Max

Hey, I'm Max from VoiceBox. It's become all too common that someone shares a private image of themselves in confidence, but it ends up getting leaked amongst their social circle. And I know that when these things happen, it can be really tempting to want to share this new piece of gossip with your friends and oftentimes, it probably seems harmless just silly jokes teasing that will cost some embarrassment for a few days but not really do any harm in the long run. But that's rarely how it happens because jokes to you can really hurt a person who's already feeling vulnerable embarrassed and worried about their future. And this heart can be carried for years after the fact manifesting in all sorts of ways.

And as if that wasn't bad enough engaging in this particular gossip by sharing the leaked pictures around maybe illegal. Remember while it may seem like harmless fun when you're all friends possessing and sharing explicit images of minors is a crime the consequences of which far outweigh any amount of momentary excitement. And I know this is obvious advice that everyone's heard a thousand

times but it really is worth it to not further share any leaked images you might see and privately report the situation to a teacher or other trusted adult so they can help you deal with it.

Marie Collins Foundation

RM

Rhiannon-Faye McDonald

I'm Rhiannon.

I'm the Head of Advocacy at the Marie Collins Foundation.

We're a charity that's dedicated to supporting victims of technology assisted child sexual abuse and I myself was a victim of child sexual abuse online and it's essentially my job now to make sure that the voices of young people and victims and survivors are included in all of the work that we do in this area.

So whenever we're trying to think about how we can make things better for children and young people.

I want those voices of experience to be included so that we know that what we're gonna do is actually go in to help.

If there's one thing that I could tell you is that you don't need to be embarrassed or ashamed or afraid if something like this happens to you.

It's not your fault.

It doesn't matter what you have done or you have said or anything like that.

It is never your fault.

It is always the fault of the perpetrator, so there is nothing for you to be ashamed or embarrassed or scared about.

There are always people here that believe you that want to help you.

We won't judge you.

We won't shame you.

We won't blame you.

We just want to help you, so if there's ever anything that you're concerned about and you want to talk about.

Reach out because we are here and we want to help.

Vulnerable Knowledge and Practice Programme

AC

ADAMS, Caroline

So I'm Caroline Adams, and I've been a police officer for 35 years.

Prior to retiring, I now work still for policing but now I work in a role to help those who may be vulnerable or where things have happened where they may need some support and help from policing to kind of explain that in a way that makes sense.

And I suppose my message really would be that if something has happened to you

and somebody has harmed you in some way, it's really important that actually you tell someone about it and that policing is there to support young people when things happen along those lines, a lot of people hesitate sometimes to report to the police because they're scared about what might happen.

But actually we have a principal of putting children at the centre of our decision making and providing support and help to children and so I would say, do come forward if you need help and trust the police to be able to help you, and because it, it's really hard to carry things on your own.

So ask for help if you need it.

Voice Box – Margarida

Hi, I'm Margarida with VoiceBox. And I wanted to give you a reminder that things can be screenshotted by the person you send it to. You may trust the person you are sending images to but they may have ill intentions later. A few years ago when I started High School I heard about a girl who trusted her boyfriend with private photos. Only for him to share them with his friends. That betrayal haunted her for years to come. It's a sobering reminder of the risks in our digital age. Privacy is very precious. And trust should never be taken lightly, especially online. and this doesn't mean that everyone you send pictures has bad intentions and will share them with other people. After all, your relationship best.

Also, if something like that does happen to you It is the fault of the person who shares the images without consent. It's just something to be mindful of. Photos can be used for negative purposes down the line. So be careful.

Parent Zone

Vicki Shotbolt

So my name's Vicki Shotbolt.

I'm the founder and chief executive of Parent Zone and I guess I would have one message for any young person listening to this and that is just remember, your parents are fallible.

They're there to help.

They will love you more than any other adult in your life, I guess.

And it doesn't mean that they always get it right first time, but don't give up on them.

They're your support system and they will want to offer that support if they can.

Finally, a message of hope from Megan Hinton, an inspirational victim and survivor advocate working at the

Voice Box - Anna

My name is Anna, and I'm the Community Manager at VoiceBox. If another peer asks you to send pictures which by the way, we're by no means saying will happen. But if it does, we understand that you might feel pressured or worried about what others will think if you say no. But believe us you can say no and it will be okay if you do. It happened to me when I was 16. I was so anxious at the time. Thought that people might think I wasn't cool or a bit of a loser. But I never think about it anymore. Nothing bad happened just because I said no and I'm so glad that I did say no.

Marie Collins Foundation:

MH

Megan Hinton

Unfortunately, you can't change what has happened and what has been done to you, but you can go on to live a normal life that is happy with amazing support networks and go on to do amazing things in your career and be the person, the best version of you I guess you're always going to live with a bit of grief for the person that you could be.

But there is hope.

There is people there that want to support you no matter what age you are, what background you come from and if you haven't reached out for support do that.

Anonymous young person

Thank you to all our experts for taking the time to give young people this advice, also thank you for all you do in your jobs to keep young people safe.

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Bibizadeh, Roxanne

Thank you to all our listeners for engaging with our podcast.