

Dangerous Scam is Targeting Children - What Parents Need to Know

May 26, 2022 - Phone and internet scams are nothing new. They typically target vulnerable people... often the elderly... and they result in billions of dollars in damages annually. But a relatively new scam is specifically targeting children. And the results of it can be devastating for both victims and their loved ones.

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The scam is being called "sextortion" by the FBI and its target is adolescents and young adults. Victims tend to be boys and they are targeted through social media initially and once they are on the hook, the contact moves to some sort of instant messenger or direct texting. And the transition from one platform to another can be very fast.

In one recent case reported by CNN, a 17 year old boy received a text message from a stranger... supposedly a young woman. Over a period of hours, he thought a relationship was developing. Eventually, received a nude picture of the person he thought he was texting with, and she requested a nude picture of him. Shortly after he complied, he received another message. Unless he made payment, the picture he sent would be posted on the internet along with his name. Additionally, it would be sent to members of his family and to his friends.

The victim made arrangements to make payment, but the people behind the scam wouldn't let it go. They demanded more money. In the end, the victim committed suicide.

According to FBI statistics, there were 18,000 sextortion cases in 2021, and those are just the cases that were reported. Actual numbers are probably much higher simply because many victims are too embarrassed to make a report. And the people behind these scams are often difficult to catch because they are operating from overseas.

The cases targeting children are the worst. Kids may think that they have no way out... that they won't survive the public embarrassment and that their lives will be ruined. Parents need to let their children know that they can come to them with issues, even when they have done something that most adults would consider to be foolish. And they need to let them know about scams like this before they become victims.

by Jim Malmberg

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