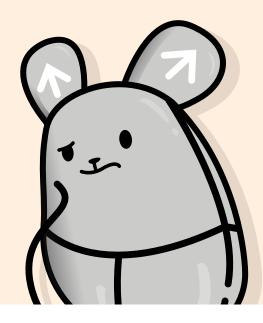## BE SMART

ONLINE SEXUAL GROOMING

The act of building up a trusting and emotional relationship with a minor via an online platform, usually with the purpose of sexual exploitation, gratification or abuse. These platforms include forums, chat groups, social media and messaging platforms.
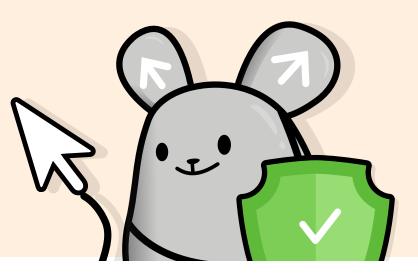
HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

- Online predators may be able to reach children through information that they share on these online platforms, especially if the information pertains to the places they visit or schools they attend.

- Predators may also frequent hobby groups to establish common ground with the minor.

- Sometimes, predators may attempt to 'catfish' – the act of pretending to be someone else online to establish a relationship. They often choose to adopt an identity close to the minor's age, to establish a closer affinity.

- They often take advantage of minors' naivety, innocence about sexual behaviour and susceptibility to gifts and affection. Predators can also provide misinformation about topics on sexual conduct and activities.

- After building trust with their victims, predators would then steer conversations towards sexual topics, and trick the minor into engaging in online sexual activity or arranging face-to-face meetings.

- They may even use emotional blackmail and coercion to pressure the child into compliance.

WHY DO I NEED TO KNOW THIS?

- According to a 2018 report by digital education think tank, DQ Institute, children aged between 8 and 12 in Singapore are at risk of being targeted by sexual predators.

- 16% of Singapore children have been involved in online sexual behaviours, such as having searched for, and/or visited websites with sexual content, and/or having had sexual conversations online with strangers.

- 12% have chatted with and met online strangers in real life.

#BeSmart

Be Aware Of What You Share

1 CLICK AWAY
Be Safe · Be Smart · Be Kind

MEDIA LITERACY COUNCIL

Supported by:
IMDA INFOCOMM MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

TOUCH Cyber Wellness

In Support of:
SG:D | GET READY!

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD IS BEING GROOMED ONLINE?

IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO DETECT THE SIGNS, AS VICTIMISED CHILDREN TEND TO BE SECRETIVE ABOUT THE SITUATION. NEVERTHELESS, YOU CAN LOOK OUT FOR THESE BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES:

- They may spend more time online and have difficulty staying away from their mobile phones or social media platforms.

- They may be excessively secretive about their online interactions with others, and are extremely resistant to their parents going through their online conversations.

GIFTS

- They may receive gifts like clothes, phones or excessive cash that they cannot afford or account for.

- They may exhibit unusual behaviours such as going out of the way or to remote places to meet up with friends.

- They may use sexual language that their parents may not expect them to know.

- They may also display unusual traits such as withdrawal, anxiety, depression, aggression or clinginess.

#BeSmart

Be Aware Of What You Share

WHAT CAN I DO IF I SUSPECT THAT MY CHILD HAS BEEN A TARGET OF ONLINE SEXUAL GROOMING?

- Avoid overreacting as this may alienate your child and discourage them from confiding in you. Provide assurance that you are there to support him/her.

- Report to the police if you have reason to believe that your child has been sexually groomed or exploited. Secure the devices through which the online interaction took place and collect evidence.

- Request to view the conversation thread that your child is having with the other party and explain that you want to understand what has happened between them.

- Parents may also call the TOUCH Cyber Wellness' TOUCHline at 1800 377 2252 to speak to counsellors who specialise in youth-related issues.
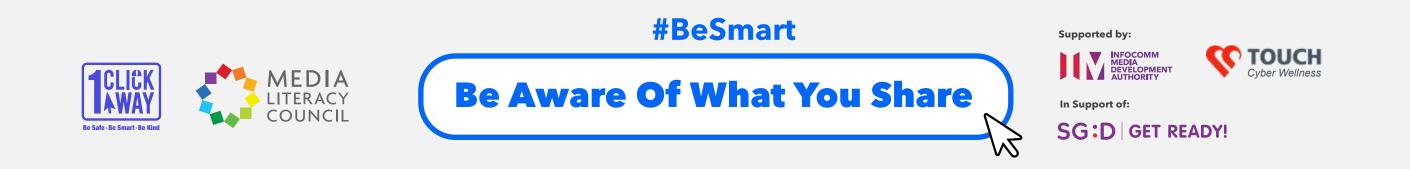
HOW CAN I PROTECT MY CHILD FROM ONLINE SEXUAL GROOMING?

- Ensure that your child is aware of what he or she shares online, and that they do not share their sensitive personal information on public and social media platforms, or with people they befriend online.
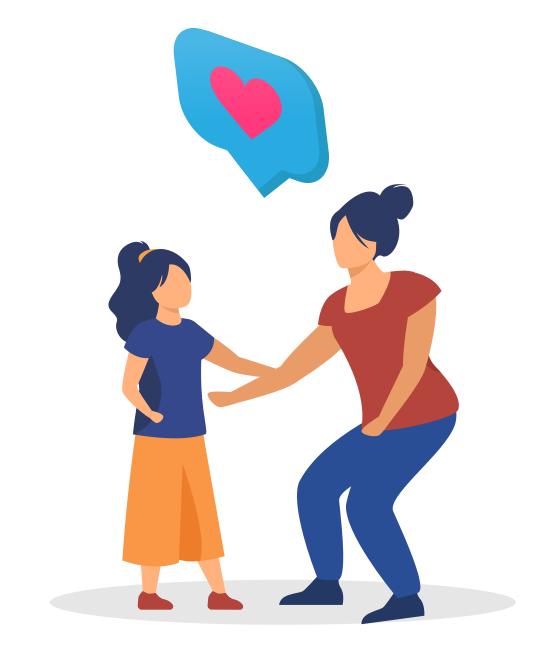
- Parents, also be aware that anything you share online about your children adds to their digital footprint.

- Predators can piece together private details collected from various posts, photos and videos.

FULL NAME

ADDRESS

SCHOOL

#BeSmart

Be Aware Of What You Share

PARENTAL CONTROL

- Keep a close watch on their online usage and activities, and learn more about what platforms they engage in.

- Consider using parental controls on their devices if your children are very young.

- Explain to your children that accepting emails, messages or opening files from strangers can be dangerous as they may contain viruses or unwanted messages.

- Teach your children that meeting up with someone they have only met online can be dangerous. They should seek parental permission to do so and that you should be present if possible.

- Educate your child about sex, using age-appropriate content.

- Teach them how to set boundaries to protect themselves from inappropriate sexual advances and physical contact.

- Build a trusting relationship with your children so that they are open to discussing the activities they engage in with you. This allows you to monitor your child's activity, without them feeling like you are policing them.

- Assure your children that if they feel uncomfortable, worried or threatened at any point, they can approach you for help.