

E-Safety 5 Minute Briefing for Parents

Let's Talk About Cunning People Online

Since the launch of the internet, online predators have targeted children and young people, mainly because the internet is relatively cheap and lots of children and young people are already there.

Online predators use fake profiles, friendships, kindness, and persuasive language to lure vulnerable children and young people. Often children who have been dealing with predators online, when asked why didn't you tell anyone or why didn't you stop talking to them, will say that because the individual they had been speaking to, had been kind, understanding, really nice and a friend to them. They had trusted the individual and didn't want to be mean.

As parents we will provide descriptions of nasty, evil, scary monsters when speaking to our children about online predators. Very rarely do we describe them as 'a nice or kind person' so often children don't associate 'nice people' with being dangerous. We tell our children to come and speak to us if someone is making them uncomfortable or worried, but we don't usually say come and speak to us if someone is being too nice to you online.

Below are some pointers to share with children when discussing online predators.

Start by looking at the word 'cunning' and what this means, give examples, and ask questions to encourage your children to contribute: (Can you think of other words that have the same meaning as cunning? Do you think a cunning person will look scary? Do you think a cunning person is always a man? Do you think a cunning person will use their own photo as a profile pic? Why?)

Follow this up by going through each of the statements below with your children and work with them to discuss examples and consequences:

- Cunning people online are people who you don't know, who are very nice or ask you lots of questions.
- Cunning people online might invite you to use a different, more secret platform (e.g., Snapchat).
- Cunning people online are people who get little pushy when you try to stop talking to them.
- Cunning people online ask you to keep things a secret.
- Cunning people online might offer you gifts for no reason.
- Cunning people online might threaten you or say they won't be your friend, so that you'll do something you don't want to do (nudes).
- Cunning people online are intently looking for children who say they're lonely, angry and cross with their parents.

Ask your children what would they do if something like this was happening to them or their friend online?

Encourage them to speak to someone who is a responsible adult (mum, dad, grandparents, aunt, teacher).

