



Understanding Sexting & Non-Consensual Intimate Image (NCII) Sharing



Image-based Sexual Abuse (IBSA) is a catch all term that includes a range of abusive tactics that involve photos, images, videos, or created content. IBSA can include deepfakes, sextortion, and non-consensual intimate image (NCII) sharing, among other behaviors. IBSA can be perpetrated by strangers, a current or ex intimate partner, friend, or acquaintance.

As we become more reliant on technology for connection and relationships, sending intimate content to a partner is common. Unfortunately, many people violate the other person's privacy and trust by sharing that content with others without permission. In some instances, images may have been originally obtained by the abuser with the survivors' consent, but then shared online without consent. In others, the content may have been originally captured without consent, including images of someone changing clothes, engaged in a sexual activity, or being assaulted. Someone can also use intimate images as a way to manipulate, blackmail, or threaten. These behaviors can be incredibly harmful and impact the survivor in various ways. Distress, humiliation, "outing" of sexual orientation, job loss, and financial hardship are just a few of these harms.

Partners in intimate relationships of any kind should uphold privacy and respect for the other person and keep any images shared in the context of the relationship to themselves. For anyone victimized by the sharing of images without their consent, understanding when its abuse and what can be done is essential to safety and privacy.

Is consensual sharing the problem?

No. Adults sharing without consent is. Sharing an unsolicited picture or sharing an image of someone else without their permission is abusive and wrong.

Sexting, or “sending nudes,” is a term used to describe sending messages or images of an intimate or sexual nature, usually by text or direct messages on social media. Sexting is consensual when people share and receive images with permission and free from pressure. If someone under the age of 18 years old sends or receives an intimate image, it can be considered child pornography and there may be legal consequences.

What is Non-Consensual Intimate Image Sharing (NCII)?

Non-Consensual Intimate Images or NCII is when someone disseminates an intimate photo or video without consent. Intimate media includes nudity, sexual activity, or wearing clothes that exposes someone’s body. Images are sometimes shared publicly or privately with certain people. Sharing images without permission is a way to control someone and take away their right to privacy.

Exposing intimate media shared by a dating partner is a form of dating violence. Power and control are at the root of abusive relationships. NCII is harmful to survivors because they have no control over how or when images are shared. Abusive partners may also pressure their partner into sending sexual images or videos, threaten to share media that’s intended to be private, or force their partner to create sexually explicit media in order to make money.

Is there a safe way to share intimate images?

Sharing intimate or sexual images with someone is always a risk. Despite being in a relationship or trusting someone, once an image is shared there is a possibility that someone other than the intended recipient will see it. Some strategies for increasing privacy could include limiting identifying information or images (face, tattoos) in the content that is sent. Certain tools and platforms could also be used

to minimize the chance of someone else getting access, such as sending via encrypted messages or through an app that allows you to delete it after it's sent, but the person who received it could always record the image to share later on. We also note that adult content sent on platforms with end-to-end encryption are often extremely difficult to find and/or remove.

What can someone do if their image is shared?

If an intimate image or video is shared without permission, the person harmed has a right to get support and take action in order to protect themselves. They can keep documentation by taking a screen capture of messages, URLs, or other information that's shared and get help through the [Cyber Civil Rights Initiative Safety Center](#). NCII is also a crime in most states so there may be legal recourses.

If the person is threatening to share content on Facebook or Instagram and you're hoping to prevent that visit [StopNCII.org](#) for support.

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