

Fake Profiles & Manipulation: A Guide for Families

Your teen took part in a lesson on spotting risky online contacts. Here is how to keep the conversation going at home.

What your teen learned

Not every online risk looks scary. It often starts with attention and flattery. Your teen learned to notice patterns: a profile that doesn't add up, trust that grows too fast, pressure to keep things secret, moving to disappearing messages, and small boundary tests. Four words sum it up: **Identity, Secrecy, Speed, Pressure.**

Conversation starters

- "Who do you talk to online that you haven't met in person?"
- "How can you tell if a profile is real?"
- "If someone asked you to keep a chat secret from us, how would you handle it?"

Tips for parents and caregivers

- **Stay curious, not scared.** Ask about their games and apps with interest. Teens share more when they don't expect a ban.
- **Be the safe person.** Tell your teen they can always come to you, even if they broke a rule, without losing their phone.
- **Talk about secrets.** Healthy friendships don't need to be hidden from everyone who cares about them.
- **Never blame.** If someone manipulated your teen, the fault is with that person. Stay calm, save the evidence, and get help.

If something feels off

1 Pause

Don't rush to keep the conversation going.

2 Save it

Keep screenshots of messages and the account.

3 Block / report

Use the app's tools if it crosses a line.

4 Tell someone

Talk to a trusted adult or a safe person.

Where to get help

1564

National Lifeline for emotional support, open 24/7

LARA

Email for support and guidance:
laraa@laraa.org

112

Internal Security Forces, if someone is in danger or threatening you

Take It Down (takeitdown.ncmec.org): Free help to remove private images taken before you turned 18. The image never leaves your device.