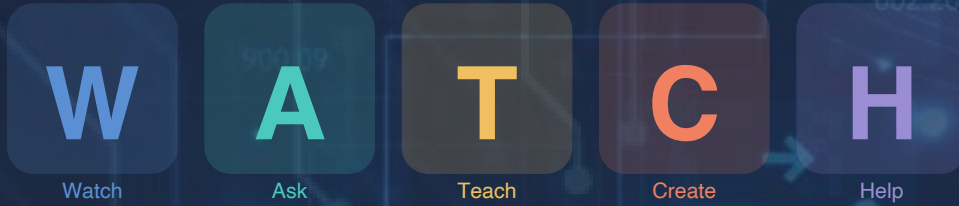


STRONG PARENTS · SAFER FAMILIES



The Parent Playbook

Protecting Kids in the Digital World



OPERATION
LIGHT SHINE

You don't have to have all the answers to protect your child.
You just have to stay present.

The W.A.T.C.H. Framework

In a world that's constantly changing, your role hasn't. Your child still needs your voice, your guidance, and your leadership.



Watch

Pay attention to your child's world, not from fear, but from care. Know what they enjoy, who they're talking to, and how they spend their time.

Devices in shared spaces

Know their apps



Ask

Keep the conversation going in everyday moments, car rides, dinner, bedtime. Simple questions build trust over time.

"What do you like about that app?"

"Who do you usually talk to?"



Teach

Your child doesn't need perfection, they need preparation. Help them think critically, not just avoid specific things.

Not everyone online is who they say

Worth ≠ attention or approval



Create Boundaries

Boundaries aren't punishment, they're protection. Clear expectations give kids confidence and clarity.

Consistency builds safety

Limits on devices & bedrooms



Help

When something goes wrong, and at some point it might, your child needs to know exactly where to go.

No hiding, no fear

Your response shapes their future

Ages 6–10 · Elementary SchoolEarly Exposure + Accidental Risk — *The conversation starts the moment they go online***What's Happening**

Kids are introduced to devices, games, and YouTube-style content earlier than ever. Most risks are accidental, but exposure can happen quickly. Predators don't wait for kids to get older, they go where children already are, including Roblox, online games, and any platform that allows communication. The right time to talk to your child about online safety is the moment you give them access to any internet-connected device, app, or game, even at age 5.

TOP RISKS

- Inappropriate content (ads, videos, pop-ups)
- In-game chat with strangers
- Clicking unknown links or downloads
- Sharing personal info without understanding consequences
- Being manipulated by online predators using in-game rewards (virtual currency, items) to move to private platforms

WATCH FOR

- Repeating inappropriate language or topics
- Wanting to hide screens
- Sudden fear or confusion after being online

PARENT STRATEGY**1****Keep devices in shared spaces**

No unsupervised browsing. Visibility matters at this age.

2**Use strong parental controls**

Set filters, restrict downloads, and limit communication features.

3**Start simple conversations**

"Not everyone online is who they say." "If something ever makes you feel sad, scared, or uncomfortable, online or anywhere, tell me or another trusted adult right away."

A trusted adult is someone safe you can talk to: a parent, school counselor, police officer, or your doctor. Help your child name several trusted adults they could go to.

4**Create the habit of openness**

Normalize showing you what they are doing online.

5

If your child has online access, have these additional conversations, now Age-appropriate safety talks aren't optional once a child is online. For young children, keep it simple: *"If anyone ever asks you to do anything, shows you anything, or makes you feel sad or scared, tell me or a trusted adult immediately."* If you're not ready to have this conversation, your child may not be ready for online access..

Your Goal: Build trust, awareness, and safe habits early.

Ages 11–13 · Middle School**Curiosity + First Contact Risk****What's Happening**

Kids begin exploring independence, social media, and friendships online. This is where grooming and manipulation often begin.

Note: Many victims of online exploitation are younger than middle school age. Do not wait until 11 to begin these conversations, start when your child first goes online.

TOP RISKS

- Talking to strangers posing as peers
- Exposure to sexual content
- Pressure to share images
- Cyberbullying and social comparison

WATCH FOR

- New "online friends" you've never heard of
- Increased secrecy with devices
- Mood swings tied to online activity
- Reluctance to talk about what they're doing

PARENT STRATEGY**1****Stay engaged without pulling away**

This is not the time to step back. It is time to lean in.

2**Set clear boundaries**

No devices behind closed doors. Approved apps only. Know passwords.

3**Teach critical thinking**

"Why would someone you don't know want to talk to you?"

4**Reinforce one key truth**

"You will never be in trouble for telling me anything."

5

Teach your child about trusted adults. Make sure they know they don't have to come only to you. A trusted adult can be a parent, school counselor, police officer, pediatrician, or another safe person in their life. Ask them to name a few. Knowing they have options makes them more likely to speak up.

Your Goal: Protect without pushing them away. Stay close, even as they seek independence.

Ages 14–18 · High School

Independence + Exploitation Risk

What's Happening

Teens are building identity, relationships, and independence. Risk shifts from accidental to intentional and relational.

TOP RISKS

- Sextortion and coercion
- Sharing images that get redistributed
- Online relationships that turn manipulative
- Private accounts and hidden apps
- Reputation damage and long-term consequences

WATCH FOR

- Withdrawal, anxiety, or sudden behavior changes
- Unexplained gifts, money, or pressure
- Panic around their phone or notifications
- Emotional attachment to someone you've never met

PARENT STRATEGY**1****Lead with trust, not control**

If you only lead with rules, they'll learn to hide. Lead with trust and they'll come to you.

2**Have direct, honest conversations**

Talk about sextortion, manipulation, pressure, and consequences without fear tactics.

3**Set mature boundaries**

Clear expectations around image sharing and online behavior, always paired with support.

4**Stay present**

Even if they act like they don't need you, they do.

Your Goal: Guide decision-making, reinforce identity, and stay a safe place.

Why Kids Don't Tell

"Most kids don't speak up , not because they don't trust their parents, but because they're afraid of the outcome. Afraid they'll lose their phone. Afraid they'll disappoint you. Afraid they're already in trouble."

So when they do come to you: **pause, listen first, stay calm, and remind them they're safe.** That moment matters more than getting everything "right."

If Something Happens , Do This

1**Stay Calm**

Your child needs safety, not panic. Your reaction sets the tone.

2**Do Not Blame**

Even if they made a mistake. Blame closes the door, forever.

3

Preserve Evidence Do not delete any messages, accounts, or content. Take photos of the screen with a separate device if needed. Do not do anything that might alert the suspect that a parent is aware or that law enforcement has been contacted. Do not tell the suspect you are reporting them.

Immediately take your child's device and restrict their access to all internet-connected devices until law enforcement has responded. Complete removal from internet access is essential until investigators can assess the situation and work directly with providers to preserve evidence.

Do not report the suspect's account to the platform where the incident occurred. Doing so may cause the account to be suspended or deleted, making it impossible for investigators to identify the suspect.

4**Report**

Contact local law enforcement first. This is the fastest path to action, you will receive an immediate response. NCMEC CyberTipline reports (missingkids.org) are also important, but may take several weeks to reach local investigators. Reporting to both is encouraged, but do not delay, call local law enforcement now.

5**Support Your Child**

Emotionally and, if needed, professionally. You don't have to do this alone.

Start Tonight

Before you go to bed: have one conversation • check one device together • set one boundary • save one resource

Conversation Starters

Use these in the car, at dinner, or at bedtime. Everyday moments build the trust that protects your child when it matters most.

“ *What’s your favorite app right now? Show me how it works.* ”

“ *Have you ever seen something online that made you uncomfortable?* ”

“ *If someone ever asked you for a picture, what would you do?* ”

“ *Do you know anyone at school who has had something bad happen to them online?* ”

“ *You can always come to me, no matter what. Nothing will change that.* ”

“ *If anyone asked you to do something uncomfortable online, who would you tell?* ”

“ *Who are the people you feel safe going to if something ever happened?* ”

Remember: You don’t need a perfect moment. Simple questions in ordinary moments build the trust that protects your child when it matters most.

OPERATION LIGHT SHINE

A Word from Our Executive Director

To every parent, guardian, and caregiver reading these pages,

Thank you for taking the time to engage with this playbook. Simply picking it up means you care , and that matters more than you know.

At Operation Light Shine, our mission is to protect children from exploitation and abuse. Every day, we see the real consequences of what happens when kids are left to navigate the digital world alone. We also see the extraordinary difference that one engaged, present, trusting adult can make in a child's life.

That adult is you.

We created this playbook because we believe that strong parents raise safer kids. Not perfect parents , present ones. Parents who ask questions, set boundaries, have hard conversations, and make sure their children know that no matter what happens, they have a safe place to land.

We hope this resource gave you something practical to hold onto. Whether you're starting a conversation tonight or reinforcing habits you've already built , every step counts.

You are not alone in this. Operation Light Shine is here for you, for your family, and for every child in our community. If you ever have questions, need resources, or want to know more about how we can walk alongside you in this journey , please reach out.

Together, we can shine a light of hope.

Bryan Weight

Executive Director, Operation Light Shine

Know the apps. Know the platforms. Know how to help.

OLS is offering parents in our community free access to an online resource library with videos on:

- Gaming platforms
- Chat apps
- Social media
- And so much more!



Scan the QR code to sign up. It's 100% free and takes just a minute.
This resource is brought to you by Parent ProTech.