



Online Sexual Predators: Breaking Through the Myths

Unless you're really naive, you probably know not to believe everything you hear. There are a lot of myths and hype out there about sexual predators on the Internet. Some of it comes from the media. Some of it comes from conversations with our friends or our freaked out parents. Either way, these myths are just that ... myths. And here are some of the most popular ones...

Myth #1: There's a sexual predator behind every cyber rock

If you've watched the TV show, "To Catch a Predator," you might start to think that predators are everywhere. And the media coverage only reinforces it. But we don't need to live in fear. Just understanding what's okay -- and what's not -- can protect us from sexual predators online.

Myth #2: You can spot a sexual predator by his appearance

Many teens assume that sexual predators are slimy-looking men. They're fat, old, and smoking cigars. That's not the case at all ... at least not in most cases. Sexual predators can be as young as a college student ... or as upstanding a citizen as his college professor. Some Internet sexual predators are actually women (although only a very small number of them, and they tend to look for boys, not girls online)!

Myth #3: Sexual predators reach out through sexual communications

Sure, some sexual predators start by asking you to send a sexy pic or telling you that they'd like to meet up with you somewhere. But not all do. In fact, many sexual predators start off taking it slow. They try to learn about you and get into your heart ... all in the hopes of gaining your trust. They want to know what you like, what turns you on, and make you feel better about yourself.

Myth #4: All Internet predators use the same tactics

Sexual predators are all different, online and offline. And they all use different techniques for reaching out. They're not always old and they don't always pretend to be teens. They may like girls or they may like boys. They may offer you gifts ... or not. They may threaten you ... or not. They're not necessarily pedophiles or child molesters. (They see this as "dating young.") And they're not always after girls. About one-third of the victims of Internet sexual predators are boys.