For family members

Have you received messages about someone you love?

People who organise online shaming often write to parents, siblings or partners: serious accusations, photos, sometimes threats. The aim is to isolate the person targeted and to frighten the people around them. This page takes five minutes to read, and you can print it or forward it as a PDF.

1 Right away

- ☐ If there is a concrete threat against someone in the family, call 112 in Italy or 117 in Switzerland.
- ☐ Do not reply, do not call back and do not join the group or channel to defend the person: that is exactly what the senders want.
- ☐ Save everything before you block or delete: screenshots that show the number or account name, the date and the time.
- ☐ Do not forward the messages to other relatives or friends. Never forward intimate photos or videos: doing so can be a crime for you too.

2 The accusations

- ☐ Anonymous accusations in a chat are not evidence. The people behind these campaigns pick the most serious accusations on purpose, because they isolate the victim and stop others from defending them.
- ☐ Do not try to check them yourself and do not question the person as if they were on trial. If crimes are mentioned, that is for the police and the courts.
- ☐ Do not ask to see photos or videos and do not look for them.

3 Talking to the person

- ☐ Tell them calmly what you received. Many victims do not know that the attackers also write to their family.
- ☐ Listen without pushing them to tell you everything and without judging what they did or how they feel.
- ☐ Do not promise what is not up to you, such as “it will all go away”.
- ☐ Do not decide for them: do not write to the attackers and do not report to the police in their name unless they agree.
- ☐ Offer practical help: collect the evidence for them, go with them to the police or to a lawyer.

4 Protecting the family

- ☐ Do not answer unknown or foreign numbers and give no information over the phone: where you live, where you work, who is at home.
- ☐ Agree on a code word to recognise fake calls from people pretending to be a relative or the police.
- ☐ On WhatsApp turn on “Silence unknown callers”; on Telegram hide your number (Privacy and Security › Phone Number › Nobody).
- ☐ Be wary of anyone who offers to find the attackers or delete everything for money: it is almost always a scam.

5 You can ask for help too

- ☐ If the threats are aimed at you, you are a victim too and you can report them to the police.
- ☐ In Switzerland, victim support on 142 is free, answers 24 hours a day and also helps family members. To talk to someone, call 143, Die Dargebotene Hand / La Main Tendue.
- ☐ In Italy, Telefono Amico (02 2327 2327) and Samaritans (06 77208977, 13:00 to 22:00) listen for free, in Italian.
- ☐ If young people in the family are affected: Pro Juventute 147 in Switzerland, Telefono Azzurro 19696 in Italy.

Read more

- Threats against you and your family that started on Telegram: how to protect the people close to you
- Coping with the blow: what online shaming does to your health and where to find free listening support
- How to preserve evidence of online shaming on Telegram
- Fake hackers and fake agencies: anyone who promises to recover, delete or “destroy” only wants your money

Checked on 19 October 2026. General information, not legal advice.

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