

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEXTING

*Sexting is an unfortunate reality that we as parents have to deal with. It's becoming more common than we'd like to believe. Now is the time to sit down with your kids to set sexting boundaries and explain the serious consequences to **any** kind of sext.*

Just like you have the talk about the birds and the bees and the dangers of drinking and driving, we must include the dangers of sexting. Teens need to understand how they could be exploiting themselves or others by sending sex texts.

Once a picture is attached to a text and sent, it can never be taken back. The "love of our children's life" today could be the "jerk" of tomorrow who decides to forward that very private photo to all of their friends. Make sure your kids understand the serious consequences that arise from sexting and how it can negatively change their lives forever!

Thirty-nine percent of teens have admitted to sexting and fifty-one percent of teen girls feel pressured to send explicit photos, with the numbers increasing at an alarming rate. "Not my child" is what parents want to believe, but the statistics show there are many teens participating in this racy and growing trend of sexting. Sexting escalates one step further to the brink of total destruction when you realize that the recipient of a "sext" has the ability to easily forward and share these inappropriate photos or messages with anyone he or she chooses. Who knows where these pictures could end up? The possibilities are frighteningly endless. The second a child hits the "send" button, or uploads a photo to the Internet that includes a "sext," serious consequences can result in:

- Potential to be arrested and charged for child pornography
- Requirement to register as a sex offender
- Humiliation among peers because a once-private photo was posted online and/or forwarded to others
- Injuries, suicides, or attacks
- Attraction of stalkers or online predators
- Hazing or name-calling
- Sexual harassment, textual harassment, or sextortion
- Possible expulsion from school

Sexting is practiced more often than you think. Teens have been arrested for sending explicit photos of themselves or of their significant others via text and online. Make it a habit to monitor photos on your child's cell phone, mobile device, and social media sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, or any other social media outlet to which your teen belongs.

If you have taken the pro-active steps of opening the lines of communication with your children about sexting, regularly monitor their cell phone pictures **and** executing the "*Rules of Engagement*" contract, you'll be fifty steps ahead of the sexting epidemic that's taking a toll on our teens.

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