

TEXTUAL HARASSMENT WARNING SIGNS

Harassment delivered by text or online is about the bully who can reach out to their target any time and from anywhere!

- Almost 50% of teens have admitted to being harassed, bullied or threatened online or by text.

Today's headlines are full of kids being virtually attacked by text message. They're being cyberbullied, threatened, and harassed on a daily basis, falling victim to the perils of the easy exchange of information that mobile devices offer.

Most parents are aware of the textual harassment problem, but their first thought is to immediately dismiss it because it sounds impossible that their child could be involved. We hear about tragic situations that have occurred as a result of textual harassment on the news, on the radio and on the Internet. Kids are getting beaten up both physically and emotionally, with some even committing suicide as a result. We just don't believe that textual harassment could happen to our children while under our watch. Believe me when I tell you that your teen knows someone that has been, or is being bullied or threatened by text message.

A major hurdle for parents is detecting the early warning signs of textual harassment. With most teens having their own cell phones, how can parents know when texting gets to the point of harassment? Most parents don't know the full extent of their child's anguish until it's too late. Yes there are signs, but they are subtle and often silent:

- Self isolation – even from their best friends
- Extreme emotional and irrational behavior
- Sudden loss of their favorite interests
- Sudden reduction of social activities
- Strange behavior including texting at all hours of the night
- Continuous sleep deprivation
- Overly possessive of their phone
- Extreme secrecy about who they're texting

I highly recommend adding Parental Controls to your child's cell phone. This service allows you to place important controls around texting, and is available by a majority of wireless providers for a low monthly fee.

If you have concerns with the safety of your child, you have every right to take their phone and look at their messages and photos. Phones are a privilege, not a right, especially since you're probably the one paying the bill.

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