



Confront Teens about Sexting

May of last year, we first brought you news of an emerging trend among young people—the sharing of sexual images and texts through cell phones, commonly known as SEXTING. Due to the widespread availability of mobile technology, the sky-high hormone levels of young people, and the difficulty that they can have understanding the consequences of their decisions, not-so-innocent text messages are being sent from cell phones all over America.

It's particularly distressing when the consequences of sexting get so out of hand that a teenager feels the only solution is suicide. When Jesse Logan pressed 'send' from her cell phone, she did not imagine that an audience beyond her boyfriend would receive her nude pictures.

As trusted adults with a mission to protect children online, engage your communities on the issue of sexting. Share these tips with young people so that they are better informed.

Tips to Prevent Sexting

THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES of taking, sending, or forwarding a sexual picture of someone underage, even if it's of you. You could get kicked off of sports teams, face humiliation, lose educational opportunities, and even get in trouble with the law.

NEVER TAKE images of yourself that you wouldn't want everyone—your classmates, your teachers, your family, or your employers—to see.

BEFORE HITTING SEND, remember that you can't control where this image may travel. What you send to a boyfriend or girlfriend could easily end up with their friends, and their friends, and their friends...

IF YOU FORWARD a sexual picture of someone underage, you are as responsible for this image as the original sender. You could face child pornography charges, go to jail, and have to register as a sex offender.

REPORT any nude pictures you receive on your cell phone to an adult you trust. Do not delete the message. Instead, get your parents or guardians, teachers, and school counselors involved immediately.

For more information about sexting or other Internet safety issues, please contact Laurie Nathan at lnathan@ncmec.org or 703-838-8194.

