***Sexting & Teens- Know the Signs***

***It happened by accident. One of your teen’s friends accidentally sent the photo to your phone number. As you are stunned by the what you see in the picture on your phone, your teen walks into the room. They see the angry look on your face as they sit on the couch, ready for the coming tirade as their mind works to come up with some type of legitimate excuse. So What about The Dangers of*** [***Sexting***](http://nobullying.com/why-sexting-should-be-a-strong-concern/)***?***

Yet there is no legitimate excuse when catching your teen in a nude photograph sent over your cell phone. The only comfort you have at the moment was finding out about the sexting so no more nude photographs can be sent over everyone’s mobile devices. Yet you wonder what you can do, besides grounding your teen for life, to prevent such a thing from happening again.

**The Dangers of Sexting:**[**Noticing The Signs**](http://nobullying.com/why-should-you-stop-sexting/)

[Sometimes it is not that easy to find out your teen is sexting](http://nobullying.com/teens-and-sexting/). Yet, as responsible parents, we need to take notice of the signs that something like this may be going on. Some signs to look for may include:

* If you see your teen acting strangely embarrassed when you look at them.
* If your teen keeps the door closed constantly as when you knock on the door, your teen yells out to not come inside because they are getting dressed.
* Your teen refuses to let you see their cell phone, or they hide the phone somewhere in their room so you can’t get to it.
* Your teen suddenly changes their personality. They are wearing clothes you would deem are a bit risque or sexy.
* Your teen won’t allow you to see what they are doing online, keeps certain files password protected, or visits social networking sites that aren’t appropriate for them.

Vigilance is key when it comes to stopping your kids from texting inappropriate photographs. By noticing some of the above signs, you can take the steps to find out what is wrong with your teen and try to stop the destructive behavior before it starts.

[**Talking With Your Teen About The Dangers of Sexting**](http://nobullying.com/sexting-on-snapchat/)

The best way to prevent your teen from sharing photos of themselves is to talk to them. This involves more than just telling them about the dangers of sexting. It also involves understanding the reasoning behind why your teen wants to send photos of themselves over their cell phone.

Often, you will find out that they are being pressured by their girlfriend or boyfriend to take sexy pictures. Another reason may be because someone in a peer group is pretending to care about them, and only wants photos to embarrass your teen later on.

Listen attentively to what your teen has to say, then tackle each of their reasons with a logical explanation. A calm and even tone is the best approach at the moment. Don’t try to ridicule your teen over their reasons for sexting. This will only cause them to feel resentful and shut out all of your advice. Instead, let them hear their own arguments and your calm answers. In this manner, your teen can start putting the facts together to understand why sexting is so dangerous.

Once your teen opens up to listening to you about why their reasons for sending sexy photos of themselves over their cell phone is not a good idea, you can now explain to them the dangers of sexting. Focus on the following reasons.

**The Dangers of Sexting: It Is Illegal**

[Sending any type of nude photography over any type of mobile or computer device is illegal](http://nobullying.com/is-sexting-illegal-maybe-in-your-state/) when the person in the photograph is under the age of 18. It is considered trafficking child porn. Even if the photograph is of your teen and your teen sent the photo to someone else, they can receive criminal charges. Having possession of the photos falls under the criminal charges of possession and distributing the photos across state lines is considered a federal offense.

Let your teen know that even if the photos aren’t of themselves, they can still be criminally charged. They may have to register as sex offenders as this will have a negative impact on their entire lives.

**The Dangers of Sexting: Sexy Photos Can Be Shared Online**

[Your teen may believe that only one or two people will see the sexy photos online](http://nobullying.com/what-is-sexting/). But all camera applications on a cell phone have the capabilities of sharing photos on social media networks. With only a few presses on the touch screen, your teen’s photo can be seen by millions of unknown people on the Internet.

The dangers are intense when an unwanted photo ends up on the Internet. It can be shared thousands of times between other people and the teen has no way of stopping it from happening. Even if they try to delete it off the phone or the computer, there are still ways for it to be retrieved. People online may harass the teen, tease them, or make inappropriate comments that can damage the teen’s self-esteem.

Inform you teen that by sharing sexy photos, their life could be in real danger. There are people online who will seek out teens in sexy photos and proposition them for sexual favors. The person may try to kidnap the teen or trick them into meeting somewhere.

**The Dangers of Sexting: Sexy Photos Can Fall Into The Wrong Hands**

Your teen also needs to realize that sexy photos can have repercussions on their future careers. No matter how old they become, they must deal with the fact that an employer may find the incriminating photos.

With more employers using Internet searches to screen potential employees, the teen may find themselves passed up for great career positions all due to a photo they shared during their teen years that made its way online. The photo can also be detrimental to their personal life if a spouse finds out about the shared sexy photos.

[**Your Teen Can Now Understand The Consequences**](http://nobullying.com/sexting-tips-prevention/)

Once your teen understands the dangers, both of you can take the proper steps to practice safe mobile cell phone use. The best way to do this is to show your teen how responsible you are with a mobile device. Teens learn by example, and a teen won’t learn to be careful with their phones if they see you being irresponsible when using one. Practice responsible cell safety and tell your teen to do the same.

[**Getting Your Teen To Practice Mobile Phone Safety**](http://nobullying.com/twitter-privacy-what-should-you-do-to-protect-your-kids/)

Now that your teen is onboard with you about mobile sexting, you can help them make the right decisions when it comes to using their mobile phones. Help your teen make the smart choices by using a simple checklist they should remember if being placed in a situation where somebody wants them to take sexy photos of themselves using their cell phone or to forward sexy photos of other people.

* **What Will Happen?** Your teen needs to think about what will happen if they take sexy photos of themselves. Could they face embarrassment, humiliation, criminal charges, or a ruined reputation?
* **What Will People Who You Respect Think?** Teens can have role models and friends they look up to positively. Have them think about what the sexy photos will negatively do to the relationships they have with their friends and role models.
* **What Is Done Cannot Be Undone:** Your teen has to understand that once they hit the “send” or “share” button on their cell phones, they can’t undo their actions. Once they share photos with other people, they will lose control of how that photo is shared and used.
* **What Happens When Faced With Criminal Charges?** Your teen must take into consideration that they will eventually get caught by law enforcement for sharing child pornography. Your teen could face criminal charges, and they will have a criminal record hanging over them when going to college or seeking employment.

Whenever your teen faces the situation again, they can think about the above checklist so they can make the decision to not get involved with texting. It may take a few reminders and you staying on your toes. Yet you should see your teen taking all the information about sexting to heart.

**What To Tell Your Teen If They Find Sexy Photos Sent To Them**

Sometimes your teen may find photos sent to them that are a bit on the risque side. Don’t just immediately yell at your teen or accuse them of sexting. Remember, many people keep a contact list of people they like to call. If that person accessed that list to send the sexy photo to every person, your teen may have receive the unasked photo by mistake.

Let your teen know that if they should receive sexy photos by someone, they should not share the photos with other people or delete them. Instead, your teen should come talk to you immediately. If you teen cannot do this because they are at school, tell your teen to go speak with a teacher or school counselor that they feel comfortable speaking with.

Your teen may, at first, balk at such a suggestion. They don’t want to be seen as a snitch about the photographs. You need to inform your teen about the consequences their friends could get into if they continue to share or post the sexy photos to other people. Let your teen know that if they cared about their friends, then they should tell an adult about it.

Don’t sugarcoat your role in what is going to happen. As the adult, you will need to either contact the parents, the school administration or the police. By this time, your teen should understand the dangerous situation in regards to sexting. It’s true that their relationship with their friends may end. Yet let them know that such negative influences should not be a part of your teen’s life.

**Teach Your Teens About Values And Respect**

After teaching your teens about the dangers of sexting and sending sexy photos over the Internet, now would be a great time to have a talk with your kids in regards to valuing and respecting their own bodies. Let them know that this is not the way to get attention, belong in a peer group, or to get a boyfriend/girlfriend.

The teen should come to understand that they should be seen as more than just sexual objects by other people. They should never expose themselves in such a way or allow others to intimidate them to do things that they do not feel comfortable about doing. Let your teen know that it is fine to tell other people “No,” and that their choice cannot be taken away from them when it involves dangerous behavior such as sexting.

Also talk with your children about respecting other people. Everyone has different values, ideals and behaviors that may be different from other people. Just because other teens are different does not mean that the other teens need to be humiliated with the sending of racy or sexy photos of them. It is never okay to take photos of people in embarrassing situations, such as taking a photo when in the school’s changing room, just to share the photo and humiliate them.

With teens learning to respect each other and their values, you are making them into responsible children who will grow into responsible adults. Teens are not born knowing all the rules about life or the growing technology around them. It is up to the parents to teach and show them what type of behavior is acceptable and what type of behavior is unacceptable.

**Start by having meaningful conversations with your teens. Once the both of you learn how to talk and listen to each other, it will be easier to address problems and dangerous situations your teen may find themselves in. Your teen will have your trust, and you will be able to trust your teen to make the right decisions in their life when it comes to taking sexy photos of themselves and sharing the photos with other people.**