

What can you do as parents:

Why do teens share sexts of other people?

Talking to Your Teen About Sexting

Don't wait for something to happen.

Talk to your teen NOW about:

- Thinking before hitting send – would they want you to see that photo or message? If not, it probably isn't okay to send it.
- Ask if they've been pressured to send or receive sexually explicit photos or if they think anyone in their school is getting pressured and think with them about what they can do to resist or get help if needed.
- Discuss different kinds of social pressure and how even asking someone once to send or share a sext can create pressure on the other person.
- Sexting has too many risks for it to ever be a good idea. Talk about social and legal consequences of engaging in sexting activity on either end (sending, sharing, receiving).
- Talk to youth about coming to you or another trusted adult if they receive an unwanted sext.
- It's never okay to forward or show someone a sext from someone else, except for sharing with an adult to get help.

- Some teens might be pressured or manipulated into sharing an image of themselves or one they received of someone else.
- Some might share a sext to show off.
- Some might do it as revenge for a relationship that ended badly.

Teens may give many reasons, but none of them are okay. Sexts should never be shared.

It is against the law to send a sext to a person under 18. If your teen receives a sext, they may want to tell a trusted adult, go to the police and call the statewide hotlines for support.

Contact your local Network program for more resources and support:

Statewide Hotlines

Domestic Violence: 800-228-7395

Sexual Violence: 800-489-7273

www.vtnetwork.org



First thing first: what the heck is sexting anyway?

Sexting is sending or receiving sexually explicit pictures, videos and/or messages through electronic devices. This direct form of communication can make teens believe that their intimate conversations will remain private.

Some phone apps are specifically designed to increase the feeling of privacy. A popular one you may have heard of is SnapChat, which supposedly deletes a picture sent through it within moments of it being opened.

However, these applications cannot assure privacy as receivers of the images can take screen shots or open it when other people are around. With technology, there is no way of assuring privacy of any pictures or texts sent.



Why do teens sext?

There are many reasons a teen might choose to send a sexually explicit image including:

- To show off or entice someone in hopes of starting a new relationship
- To experiment with their sexuality and interest in sexual activity
- To prove their commitment or enhance their relationship
- Because it feels like “everyone is doing it”
- May be pressured, forced or coerced into doing it by someone they are interested in or by a friend

Experimenting with expressing themselves sexually is a natural part of teen development and sexting is just an extension of that. While this exploration is natural, it is important that adults help teens understand the risks and consequences of engaging in sexting.

The real problem with sexting lies in the fact that all too often, those images are shared without permission.



Consequences of taking, sending or forwarding a sext:

- Everything sent or posted can be copied, forwarded and reposted. It doesn't matter how much your teen trusts the other person, someone else might get a hold of their phone or relationships might change.
- There is no way to control or get the information back once it is sent.
- There are social consequences if images are shared, including humiliation, rumors and harassment.
- People who engage in sexting may be suspended from school or lose educational or employment opportunities.
- **Police Involvement:** it's illegal to possess, send or forward sexually explicit images OF someone under the age of 18 (including yourself) OR TO someone under 18.

