

**THE DANGERS
OF SEXTING:
What Teens Need to Know**

DVD Version

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Teacher's Resource Book

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DVD MENU

MAIN MENU

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1. Introduction
2. What is Sexting?
3. Consequences
4. Sexting and the Law
5. What You Can Do About Sexting
6. Conclusion

▶ **Teacher's Resource Book**

A file of the accompanying Teacher's Resource Book is available on the DVD. To open the file you need to load the DVD onto a computer that has a DVD-ROM and Adobe Acrobat Reader. Right click on the DVD icon and then double click on the file titled "Teacher's Resource Book."

INTRODUCTION

In a few short years, email, chat rooms, text messages and social networking sites have dramatically changed the way that most of us communicate. As we become more dependent on these fast, convenient forms of technology, we inadvertently give up some control over who can access and share our private information.

Teenagers in particular have embraced these new forms of technology as a normal and necessary part of life. In fact, many of today's teens are too young to remember a world without email. With this rapid change in communication, there have been many challenges and concerns. One of the fastest growing problems related to online communication is the phenomenon of sexting—sending sexually suggestive messages, photos or videos between cell phones or via the Internet.

Teens are especially vulnerable to indulging in this type of communication for several reasons. First, many teenagers spend an enormous amount of time sending text messages. According to a Nielsen survey (*How Teens Use Media: A Nielsen Report on the Myths and Realities of Teen Media Trends*, June 2009), American teens sent and received an average of 2,272 text messages a month. This figure is double that of the previous year. Second, teens are often unable to recognize the risks of sexting. Lack of maturity and life experience can make it harder for teens to understand the long-term consequences. Third, many young people do not realize that digital messages never truly go away. Even when deleted, these messages can easily be retrieved and shared.

To educate students, we must be sure they understand the social, emotional and legal consequences of sexting. ***The Dangers of Sexting: What Teens Need to Know*** was created to empower young people with information designed to help them avoid this risky behavior. After viewing the video and participating in the activities in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to make smarter choices about digital communication. The goal is not to demonize cell phones or the Internet, but to recognize them as helpful and convenient tools—provided we use them with common sense.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After viewing *The Dangers of Sexting: What Teens Need to Know* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- define sexting and discuss the problems it can cause
- identify common dangers associated with sending inappropriate texts
- recognize the legal, social and emotional consequences of sexting
- make smarter, more informed decisions when it comes to digital communication
- recognize that certain texting situations can be harmful, even when close friends are involved
- appreciate that hitting the "send" button on a text is truly irreversible
- understand ways to safeguard their personal information
- realize that computers, cell phones and other gadgets come with a great deal of responsibility

PROGRAM SUMMARY

As the program opens, real teens share personal stories about sexting. "He kept asking for pictures of me," says Autum, "He kept saying nobody would find out." Marissa says, "When the pictures were taken, I never thought they would end up on the Internet." Ben explains how his experience with sexting had serious consequences. "They were trying to charge me as a sex offender because I sent the picture to another friend."

After the title segment, we meet narrators Damian and Katie. They discuss how computers, cell phones and social networking sites like Facebook make it easier than ever for people to share information. These forms of communication can also make it easier to share inappropriate images and messages. As Damian explains, "Sexting is the electronic sharing of sexually explicit photographs, videos or text messages, primarily through cell phones."

Kiera and Dylan, two real teens from San Diego, California, have been educating other students about the dangers of sexting. "I think it's a responsibility of somebody like me who has engaged in it," says Dylan, "to try to educate other people." He says a recent poll conducted by the Associated Press and MTV suggests that about 30% of all teens have participated in sexting.

Why is sexting so common? One reason, Katie believes, is because people think of it as a joke and don't realize how serious it can be. Autum explains a different reason for sexting. "In my school, a bunch of girls do it. I think they do it for the same reason I did... because they think the guy is going to like them more. They think if they don't send it to him, he'll stop liking them." Marissa says peer pressure also plays a role. "A lot of girls think that other girls are doing it, or that other girls are being sexual, and they don't want to be left behind or pushed aside for another girl."

Keira and Dylan agree that peer pressure is a major cause of sexting. "Kids are pressured and encouraged to be sexual," says Dylan, "and sexuality is seen as a barometer for how cool you are." He says that teen boys who get girls to send naked photos can feel "like a stud and a player." Ben adds, "They just think it's a big joke," he says, "They don't think of the girl's feelings at all."

Keira goes on to describe another reason for sexting: revenge. Although it may feel safe to share a photo or text with a boyfriend or girlfriend when things are going well, there is always the possibility that compromising photos might be sent out if there is an argument or a nasty breakup.

Next, the program looks at the consequences of sexting. "He kept asking for pictures of me in my bra and underwear," says Autum. "And then he ended up showing it to people on the bus and stuff." She explains how it felt to be betrayed. "I felt like everybody was going to find out, and it would give me a really bad reputation. It was kind of hard to go to school."

"Every person knows what it's like to make a bad decision," says Elizabeth Schroeder, Executive Director of Answer, a sexuality education organization at Rutgers University. "If it's something we

PROGRAM SUMMARY CONTINUED

said to a friend...we can apologize. Sexting is different. Once it's sent, we can't take it back. We can't take back the damage that is done once that picture is out there."

Keira describes how the nature of communication technology is permanent. "Pictures that you post or text messages that you send are always going to be there," she says. "People can always save them." As Katie explains, "You have no control over who will see it. You have no control over how they will use it." Viewers are reminded that emails, texts and social network updates can become viral very quickly.

Marissa recounts having a slumber party with her girlfriends. They were dancing and taking photos. Years later, a photo of the girls in their bras was seen on the Internet. "I don't know how long it was on there," Marissa says, "or how it got there." Dylan reminds viewers that a photo can become part of your permanent identity. "So when people are going to hire you, or when colleges are looking at applications, it could tarnish you."

At this point, the narrators discuss sexting and the law. Damian explains that, in some states, anyone who has a sexually explicit photo of an underage person can be charged as a sex offender for possessing child pornography. Ben relates his experience with this law. He received a nude photo of a girl and—without thinking—forwarded it to a friend. His phone was confiscated at school. Later, he was asked to report to the police department. As Brian's dad explains, "They told me that they were going to charge these kids as sex offenders for child pornography." Ben realized that being charged as a sex offender could ruin his life. Eventually the charges were dropped, but other teens have not been as lucky.

As Katie points out, "Even if the person sending the picture is a friend or someone you're dating, the laws in some states say that both the sender *and* receiver of the picture can be charged as sex offenders." Elizabeth Schroeder explains that once a person is legally convicted as a sex offender, they need to register as a sex offender. This can affect their academic life moving forward as well as their professional life. Schroeder adds, "In some communities, they have to go around and introduce themselves in the community as a sex offender."

Next Damian and Katie help viewers understand what to do if they are tempted or pressured to participate in sexting. They make it clear that a person always has the right to refuse. The young girls who have shared their stories encourage others to think carefully about someone who pressures them to send photos. Dylan advises other guys not to pressure girls they like. "Ultimately your peers are going to respect you more if you don't end up abusing a girl like that."

What if you have sent a sexual image or text and regret it? As Katie explains, you should ask anyone who received the text to delete it. If a person refuses to delete it, Damian suggests talking to an adult who you know and trust. Elizabeth Schroeder says some teens stay silent because they're afraid of getting in trouble with their parents. She reminds viewers that parents just want their kids to be healthy and safe. "They might be angry at first, but they'll be glad you told them."

PROGRAM SUMMARY CONTINUED

What if you receive an explicit photo? "Erase it right away," says Katie. "Don't send it to any friends." Dylan and Keira also suggest telling an administrator, coach, teacher or parent. Telling an adult immediately may protect you later. Referring to strict child pornography laws, Elizabeth Schroeder says, "The best thing you can do is delete it immediately, do not forward it to others and make sure that somebody you trust knows that you received it and deleted it."

Katie and Damian also suggest telling the sender that you don't want to receive sexually explicit messages. If the sender persist, you can block him or her on your phone or computer. Most important, says Katie, is to set an example for others. As Keira says, "People are going to listen to you when you stand up for something that's right."

A NOTE TO THE TEACHER

In addition to *The Dangers of Sexting* video for your students and the student activities and fact sheets in this Teacher's Resource Book, this product also includes a supplemental video/DVD component that is suitable for group viewing by your staff and colleagues as well as by parents in your district.

A transcript of *Sexting: A Video Guide for Parents and Professionals* is provided for your reference. This video will be helpful to parents, teachers and all adults who are concerned about how to help teens recognize the dangers of sexting.

These pages may be copied and distributed to your students' families.

The producers would like to thank the following people who appear in the program:

Autum:

a teen who was pressured by a boyfriend to send sexually explicit messages

Ben:

a teen who received and forwarded pictures and was almost legally charged as a sex offender

Ben's father

Dylan:

a young adult who speaks out about dangers of sexting

Keira:

a high school student who speaks out about the dangers of sexting

Marissa:

a teen who was photographed at a slumber party

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MSW:

Executive Director of Answer, a sexuality education organization at Rutgers University

Sexting: A Video Guide for Parents and Professionals

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

I'm Doctor Elizabeth Schroeder. I'm the Executive Director of Answer at Rutgers University in New Jersey. We're a national sexuality education organization and we're committed to providing sexuality education to young people and the adults who teach them around the country.

Sexting is the process through which people share sexually explicit text messages through their phones, through their hand-held devices. So it can be words and language, or it can be videos that are sent to other people, or it can be actual photographs.

The vast majority of teens, according to the data, send sexually explicit photos to a boyfriend or girlfriend. They think it's a sexy kind of present for that person.

Why Teens Sext

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

The reasons I've heard why teens sext or send pictures is first of all that they think it's funny. The second reason that I've heard from teens is because they think their boyfriend or girlfriend will like it.

Autum:

I was dating a guy at the time and I wanted him to like me more. He kept asking for pictures of me. He kept saying that nobody would find out, and you won't get into trouble for it.

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

I think for some girls, they'll say that their boyfriends pressure them to do this. For other people, there's sort of a societal pressure... whether it's actual or it's a perceived pressure. They think, *"I need to do whatever I can to keep my boyfriend interested, and so this is one way I can do it."*

Marissa:

I think a lot of girls think that maybe other girls are doing it or other girls are being sexual. They don't want to be left behind or pushed aside for another girl, so then they think that maybe they have to send a picture.

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

In a situation where a girl is really being pressured by a partner to send a sexually explicit photo, there's no easy response to that. It's very easy for an adult to say *"Don't do that,"* or *"Break up with him,"* but the reality is that in today's world, adolescent and teen girls feel a great deal of pressure to have a boyfriend and to do whatever they can to keep a boyfriend. So as a result, they're

TRANSCRIPT CONTINUED

often doing things—including sexual behaviors that they don't want to do—because they're so nervous that they'll lose their boyfriend. That includes sexting.

Keira:

Relationships aren't the longest lasting things in the world, and there seems to be a lot of tension after the breakup or if it was a pretty nasty breakup; so if you did do something that you regret, like send a picture to your boyfriend or send a sexual text, they use it as a type of revenge. *"Oh, look what she did when she was going out with me."*

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

One of the reasons we tell teens that this is such a bad idea is that even if you think you trust sharing that picture or text with a boyfriend or a girlfriend or a friend, that's all well and good when things are going well... but the minute that a big fight happens and one person says, *"I'll show you,"* that's when the problems begin. It gets forwarded out to the world.

Gender Differences**Dylan:**

I think there's a difference in the kinds of pictures [that] guys and girls send, in the sense that guys will usually just focus on their abs and leave out their face or just get their genitals and leave out anything else. Whereas girls, a lot of times, will have photos taken of them by the guys—let's say when they're having sex—of their entire body with their face included. So I think girls are definitely more exposed in the photos they send than guys are. Guys are much more protective of their identities.

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

There are certain things that boys put out there. There are certain things that boys have been socialized to do, and certain things that girls have been socialized to do. We're seeing a real clash between the genders.

We are a culture that really pushes boys to be assertive—even aggressive—to get what they want. So if we're telling them in sports to go as far as you can to get what you want, how are they going to understand that when it comes to sex and sexual boundaries, don't push so much?

Dylan:

Sexting is something that's seen as a kind of barometer for how cool you are. For a guy, the more girls who sext him, the more naked photos he has, he feels assured as to somebody wanting him. He feels like a stud and a player.

TRANSCRIPT CONTINUED

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

With something like sexting, people don't see the negative consequences for boys. So if a boy sends out a sexual picture or a sexual text, there is this attitude: *"Oh, boys will be boys, and what's so bad about that? He was just being gross or silly."* They get attention, they get laughs, their friends think they're awesome... they get benefits from breaking the rules. A girl who sends out a sexually explicit picture of herself is seen as very negative, morally reprehensible, promiscuous—all of these negative words we have to discuss girls.

Keira:

When girls send out sexual pictures, it hurts the way they feel about themselves because they hear people talking about them, calling them names or spreading rumors about them. It damages the way they look at themselves.

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

One of the biggest concerns I have—both as a counselor and as an educator—is that for girls in particular...and boys as well...for a young person with low self-esteem doing something like sexting is something that they hope will get people to like them. So they may be more vulnerable as they are with other kinds of high-risk sexual behaviors to do something like sexting.

Consequences**Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:**

Every person knows what it's like to make a bad decision. Every person has experienced at some point saying something or doing something where afterwards we thought, *"I really shouldn't have done that."* Sometimes we can fix that. If it's something we said something to a friend [that] we know we shouldn't have said, we can go back and apologize.

Sexting is different. Once it's sent, we can't take it back. We can't apologize. We can't take back the damage that has been done once that picture of us is out there. That is something that has to be emphasized to adolescents and teens.

Autum:

I understand now that it can get around fast. If you post something on the Internet, it can get around all over the world and everybody can see it.

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

It's normal for adolescents and teenagers to be curious about sexuality. It's normal for them to want to make some unwise decisions. The real focus of why sexting is such a problem is because of the far-reaching aspect and the potential permanence of it.

TRANSCRIPT CONTINUED

The idea of permanence is a challenging one for adolescents and teens to really understand, because that's an abstract concept. Adolescents and teens are concrete thinkers. So to try to think into the future... to say, *"Oh, this is what's going to happen down the line"* is very difficult for them to do. Thinking about something as permanent or forever doesn't really enter into their thought processes. *"Well, I sent this out onto the Internet or I sent this sexually explicit text message... I can just take it back... or I can get my boyfriend's or girlfriend's phone and delete it."* Well, not necessarily! Especially if they have already forwarded on to someone else.

What we really have to do is to help teens understand that once you've hit that button and it's sent, you have lost all control over it. So even if you trust your partner, even if you trust your best friend, even if you think this is just going to one person... you never know for sure. The potential consequences, emotionally and psychologically, for a young person to walk into school the next day when their photograph has been sent out to four, five, six hundred students in their community can be very far reaching.

Autum:

It was kind of hard to go to school because people would come up to you and ask about it, and you had to sit there and tell them *"No, I didn't do it."* But you did.

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

What you put out there is out of your control. You have no control over who will see it. You have no control over how they will use it. When we talk to teen boys and girls, we say, *"Once you have sent a sexually explicit text, you have absolutely no control over how that's being used."* They understand that. That's a concrete feeling they have all experienced.

Sexting and the Law**Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:**

In a number of states, policy makers are trying to have laws passed where anyone who is in possession of a sexually explicit photograph on their phone or hand-held device will be seen as [being] in possession of child pornography. That's even if someone who sent the picture is a friend, even if someone who sent the picture is someone you are dating. So even if consent was involved, and even if both people said, *"Yes, I want to do this. You have permission to have this photograph,"* the laws are looking to say that you are a sex offender.

Ben:

I was in science class when I received the picture message on my phone. Not really thinking, I just sent it to a buddy of mine. The Vice Principal called me up to the office and confiscated my phone. And that's when I knew that something was going to happen.

TRANSCRIPT CONTINUED

Ben's father:

We were told that we had to report to the Falmouth police department that evening, and we were going to speak to an officer there and a Massachusetts state trooper. They told me they were going to charge these kids as sex offenders for child pornography.

Ben:

When all these charges came up, I was pretty worried, just scared, because if I was charged as a sex offender I knew that would ruin my life.

Ben's father:

All I kept thinking about was college, basketball, and when he was going to be an adult. Those charges would be behind his record and would follow him through the rest of his life. And I thought, "Where would he get a job? Who would hire somebody who was a sex offender?"

Ben:

I never thought I would get into this much trouble for just sending it to a buddy of mine. It all happened so quick. It was just supposed to be a little joke. And it turned into a bad joke.

Text on-screen:

Charges against Ben were eventually dropped after no new complaints were filed against him. Other teens have not been so lucky and have been convicted as sex offenders.

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

Once somebody has been labeled a sex offender, they need to register as a sex offender. This can affect their academic life moving forward, their professional life. In some communities, they have to go around and introduce themselves in the community as a sex offender. So the consequences of that are far reaching. In some states, people are also looking to punish the person who sent the photograph. This has happened to both boys and girls.

Part of the challenge we have in this culture is that we're a culture that punishes before we educate. So I think many lawmakers think that if the consequence is [that] you're going to be labeled as a sex offender, you'll stop doing it. The actual consequence is that if somebody is being threatened with being labeled as a sex offender, they're not going to stop the practice. What they are going to do is be more careful about hiding it. So we have to get to adolescents and teens before they're engaging in this practice and explain to them what the different consequences are. There should be a consequence for sexting. There should be a consequence for using sexual images and forwarding them on to other people. But that consequence cannot be something like being labeled as a sex offender that can ruin someone's life. It minimizes the experience of folks

who have been victimized by a true sexual predator and puts everybody in the same category. It is as disrespectful as it is wrong.

The Role of Parents and Teachers

Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MA:

A lot of times, in addressing a teenage audience about sexting, the most important thing any educator or parent can do is ask them, *“Why do people your age do this? What kind of benefits do you think people get from sexting? How do think it’s different—what boys get out of it [versus] what girls get out of it?”*

But we also have to understand that, with adolescents and teens, it’s a lot easier for them to talk about other people than to acknowledge that they do it themselves. Many of them do it, but they want to talk about *“Oh, we know. This is not a behavior kids should be doing. Oh, those stupid girls who send those pictures of themselves. Oh, those dumb guys who keep it on their phones and show it around the lunch room.”* But nobody acknowledges, *“Oh, that’s right. That’s me, too.”*

So with something like sexting, before we can teach them what the healthy alternatives are, we have to listen. We have to ask them questions. We have to find out what that benefit is that they get from doing it. And then we can take that and use it to our advantage and say, *“Okay, what else can we do? Here are the consequences. Here are the benefits that you’re talking about. So how do we figure out an alternate to doing the sexting [that is] equally as entertaining, exciting, thrilling... but it’s not having these negative consequences?”*

Another one of the things we have to look at is what is the parent or caregiver role in this? When an adolescent finally gets a cell phone, what goes along with that? What lessons go along with that? What rules and boundaries go along with that? I don’t think any parent should just hand their kids a cell phone and say, *“Okay, now you can text me when you get to school and I’ll know you got there okay.”*

There have to be really well thought-out procedures for giving a child a phone, and that should also extend up into the teen years. What are the rules? What are the boundaries? When you come home at the end of the day, I get your phone. That may be the rule for eighth grade. In ninth grade, there are other rules. Anything involving technology. Anything involving a cell phone is a privilege—not a right. Parents have to be parents—not their kids’ friends. Sometimes we have to make unpopular decisions. In this situation, we may be making unpopular decisions that will save our kids a lot of grief down the line.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 1A

PRE/POST TEST

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Sexting is the sharing of sexually explicit:
 - a) texts.
 - b) videos.
 - c) photos.
 - d) all of the above
2. In some states, a person can face criminal charges for _____ a nude photo of a minor.
 - a) sending
 - b) receiving
 - c) saving
 - d) all of the above
3. A recent MTV poll suggests that about _____ of all young people have engaged in sexting.
 - a) 5%
 - b) 10%
 - c) 30%
 - d) 70%
4. When teens are asked why they sext each other, the reason they cite is:
 - a) they think their boyfriends/girlfriends will like it.
 - b) they want to spite or get revenge on someone.
 - c) they think it's funny.
 - d) all of the above
5. In relation to emails, the term "going viral" means:
 - a) that the email contains a hacker's code or computer virus
 - b) that the email is actually spam
 - c) that the email can spread rapidly to others
 - d) that the email has an expiration date
6. Which of the following is NOT a primary motivation for sexting?
 - a) revenge
 - b) pressure from a boyfriend or girlfriend
 - c) bonding
 - d) status
7. A suggestive photo on Facebook can be seen by:
 - a) friends and family members.
 - b) future college administrators.
 - c) future employers.
 - d) all of the above
8. Which statement is NOT true?
 - a) Someone found with a nude photo of a close friend can be charged with child pornography.
 - b) Minors cannot be charged with child pornography.
 - c) People convicted of possessing child pornography must register as sex offenders.
 - d) In some states, child pornography results in a permanent criminal record.
9. Once sent, a text, photo or email can never:
 - a) be viewed by anyone other than its intended recipient.
 - b) be inserted into a social networking site.
 - c) be taken back or undone.
 - d) none of the above
10. Which of the following is not considered a form of sexting?
 - a) posting a sexually explicit image of yourself on the Internet
 - b) taking a sexually suggestive photo of your sweetheart with a cell phone
 - c) forwarding a sexually explicit photo of someone to a friend
 - d) immediately deleting a sexually explicit photo that you received

The Answer Key appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

1. d
2. d
3. c
4. d
5. c
6. c
7. d
8. b
9. c
10. d

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 2

NO TURNING BACK

Once a photo or message leaves your phone, it's too late to take it back. It's also impossible to control where it might travel. Have you ever sent or forwarded an angry or nasty message and then regretted it? Use the back of this sheet to write a short essay.

If you have never done this, imagine that you have. Imagine this message was meant for one person, but ended up being forwarded to many. The subject of the message, your best friend, was deeply hurt and never spoke to you again.

Make sure your essay answers these questions:

1. How did you feel about yourself after the message was sent?
2. How did you feel about the other person when you sent the message?
3. Did anything happen as a result of what you sent?
4. Have you decided to behave differently? If so, explain how.
5. Why do you think people share things in text messages that they wouldn't share face-to-face?
6. Write three good reasons for not sending inappropriate messages.

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 3
REAL-LIFE CONSEQUENCES

In a recent case in Pennsylvania, two 15-year-old girls faced criminal child pornography charges after investigators found indecent pictures of the girls on someone else’s phone. If they are convicted, these teens may be sent to jail as well as having their names registered on a national database of sex offenders for the rest of their lives.

Similar cases have arisen in Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Utah and Wisconsin. Use Internet resources to learn more about one of these cases. Once you have conducted your research, use what you learn to answer the questions below. Use the back of this page if you need more room.

1. Summarize the facts of the case you researched.

2. What was the verdict or final outcome of the case? Do you agree with it? Explain your answer.

3. Did the details of this case change your views about sexting? Explain your answer.

4. Do you think laws should be passed that monitor or limit a person’s use of technology? Explain your answer.

Name: _____

Your reputation is important—and it is fragile. People judge you based upon what you do, say, think and believe. In the online world, a reputation can be changed or damaged with just one click.

Imagine this:

A student in your math class finds a classmate’s personal letter on the floor. It is filled with private, embarrassing details about both the person who wrote it as well as the person it is addressed to. While your teacher is out of the room, the student reads the letter to the class. Many people laugh and joke about it. Afterward, the student posts the letter on the wall of your school’s cafeteria.

1. How would you feel if you had written the letter? How would your reputation change if the letter went public?

2. How would you feel if the letter was written to you? How would your reputation change if the letter went public?

3. How would you feel if the letter was written by your best friend? What would you do to help your friend?

4. How would people react if a male wrote the letter? What if a female wrote the letter? If your answers are different, explain.

5. How is this situation similar to sexting or the spreading of an inappropriate message? How is it different?

Name: _____

Divide the class into two equal groups. Using any of the debate topics below, one group must argue in favor of the position (“YES”) and the other must argue against the position (“NO”). Each group must support its position with valid arguments.

Is “faceless” technology a problem?

YES: “Faceless” technologies are dangerous because people feel more secure making threats, insults and hurtful comments. Also, without body language or facial expressions, this type of communication is more difficult and has the potential to be more dangerous.

NO: “Faceless” technologies help people connect in ways they never could before. If a person feels uncomfortable, he or she can choose not to communicate through texts, emails or social networking sites.

Is online flirting dangerous?

YES: Flirting with someone online is dangerous because it is difficult to know each other’s true feelings and intentions. It is also much easier to deceive someone when you are not communicating face-to-face.

NO: Flirting online is a healthy way for people to make friends. There is no harm as long as people use common sense and do not reveal any personal details that could compromise their safety.

Is there a double standard online related to males and females?

YES: Girls are more at risk when it comes to sending inappropriate messages. Males involved in these situations are usually considered “studs” or “players.” However, girls who participate are often labeled “cheap” or “slutty.”

NO: Girls and guys are equally responsible for maintaining their reputations. Both males and females face the same consequences if they participate in sexting or other risky online behaviors.

Is it sometimes okay to send a sexy or inappropriate message online?

YES: When it comes to sexting, every situation is different. Plenty of messages are sent in the spirit of friendship and fun, without causing any harm. Besides, if two people are in a trusting relationship they should have a right to communicate in any way they like, as long as no one else is affected.

NO: Sending an inappropriate message is always a bad idea, even if someone calls it a joke or harmless flirting. It is also wrong to request this type of message or to save an inappropriate message on your phone, even if you don’t forward it. There is no gray area when it comes to sexting.

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 6

THE MYTHS OF SEXTING

Sexting, like most complicated issues, can be clouded with myths and misinformation. In order to make good choices, it is important to have good information about the risks and consequences of online communication. Discuss each myth below with a classmate. Together, write a fact that challenges the myth. Then use the *Sexting Myths* fact sheet to check your answers.

Myth 1: Everything online is temporary.

Fact 1: _____

Myth 2: You can choose to make your online profile completely private.

Fact 2: _____

Myth 3: If you get a message from someone you trust, there is no reason to worry.

Fact 3: _____

Myth 4: If a minor sends a nude photo to another minor, it is not the same thing as sending child pornography.

Fact 4: _____

Myth 5: As long as you never meet an Internet acquaintance face-to-face, that person cannot harm you.

Fact 5: _____

Myth 6: If you don't use your real name on a website or email, your message will be anonymous.

Fact 6: _____

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 7
THE RIGHT RESPONSE

In the program ***The Dangers of Sexting***, you saw how sending inappropriate messages—whether by cell phone, email or websites—can be destructive. What about *receiving* these messages? How can you respond in a way that protects your privacy and defends your reputation, or the reputation of someone else? For each message below, write how you would respond. Make sure your responses are respectful and assertive.

1. Sender writes: *Hey again. When r u going to send me some sexy pics? I'm bored!*

2. Sender writes: *Hey grl. Saw yr short skirt. Can I see more?*

3. Sender writes: *Check ths pic of Tina and pass it on. She doesn't know I took it. LOL!*

4. Sender writes: *Ben sent me ths pic and told me NOT to forward. What a loser. I h8 him!*

5. Sender writes: *U can send him a hot msg 2nite w my phone. He'll never know itz from u.*

6. Sender writes: *I got a msg ur friend Kara sent to her bfriend. Did u see it?*

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 8

SPREADING THE WORD

Now that you've learned reasons to avoid risky online behaviors like sexting, you can share that knowledge with others. Working with classmates, follow the steps below and create a project to educate younger students about online safety.

- Divide into groups of four to six people.
- Decide what kind of project you would like to create. Some suggestions include a poster, pamphlet, short video, mural, collage, play or skit, song or poetry slams.
- Decide on a theme or slogan to serve as the focus of your project.
- Assign each member a task suited to his or her talents. Students who are good at research may want to collect statistics for the project. Those who are creative may want to write, draw, take photographs or add artistic lettering.
- Decide how you will present the project to younger students. You might aim your efforts at younger grades in your own school or at students from a neighboring school. Work up a proposal and submit it to school administrators to get the permission you need.
- Before presenting your project to younger students, give a preview to your class. Find out which aspects of your project are most effective and why. Use feedback from classmates to improve your project.
- In addition to sharing with younger grades, display the projects in your classroom. Talk with friends about what you've learned through your involvement with the project.

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

Sexting is defined as sending sexually suggestive messages, photos or videos between cell phones or via the Internet.

New technologies have made it easier and faster than ever to share information across town or around the world. Faceless forms of communication, such as email and texting, give people the false security of being anonymous and safe. However, messages and images can easily be shared with others and can never truly be taken back. Texting or emailing leaves a digital footprint that can easily be traced by law enforcement authorities.

As technology has become more available, sexting has become more common, especially among young people. Consider these statistics:

- 39 percent of teens said they had sent sexually suggestive messages by text, IM or email.
- 20 percent of teenagers said they had sent or posted nude or seminude photos of themselves.

—Source: *National Campaign to Prevent Teenage and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com survey, December 2008*

Many young people falsely believe that sexting is harmless, especially among friends. However, federal and state laws make it illegal to create, possess or distribute sexually explicit photographs of minors. **This is true, even when minors are distributing pictures of themselves.**

Minors involved in a sexting incident can be charged with possession of child pornography, a serious crime in every state. Depending on the images sent, a minor could face arrest, fines, probation as well as jail time. Offenders can even be required to enter a national database of sex offenders for the rest of their lives.

Name: _____

Myth: Everything online is temporary.

Fact: The average lifespan of a tweet is eight minutes. However, the idea of cyberspace as a place of fleeting texts is misleading. Even though most messages are quickly forgotten, they never completely go away. Things you share online or over a cell phone can quickly be retrieved, even if you delete them. With the right software, it's easy for someone to copy, save and forward your information.

Myth: You can choose to make your online profile completely private.

Fact: Making your online profiles private is very important. However, no social networking site is completely safe. You should assume that everything you post will be seen by people outside your network. With modern technology, it is not difficult for people to copy your information or screen-capture your photos.

Myth: If you get a message from someone you trust, there is no reason to worry.

Fact: First of all, there is no way to make sure who is sending a text, email, IM or post. Someone could have stolen or borrowed a friend's phone, hacked into their profile page or used their password. Always be alert when sending and receiving messages. If someone makes a strange comment or request, sign off right away and try to contact your friend in person. Never arrange to meet someone or share information online.

Myth: If a minor sends a nude photo to another minor, it is not the same thing as sending child pornography.

Fact: Federal and state laws make it illegal to create, possess or distribute sexually explicit photographs of minors. This is true, even when minors are distributing pictures of themselves. Punishment can include arrest, fines, probation, jail time or registration in a national database of sex offenders.

Myth: As long as you never meet an Internet acquaintance face-to-face that person cannot harm you.

Fact: People can easily learn enough about you to find you, even if you don't know it. Never trust someone you only know online. Remember that the photos you see online might not be real and anything the person tells you could be untrue. Never respond to inappropriate, scary or embarrassing requests—even if they don't involve meeting face-to-face.

Myth: If you don't use your real name on a website or email, your message will be anonymous.

Fact: You might feel anonymous in a chat room or social network site. However, the more you share about yourself, the easier it is for someone to discover your identity. Remember, if you wouldn't do it, share it, or say it in person, you shouldn't do it to online.

Consider the message.

Before sending out a text, email or chat from your phone, take a moment to consider the message. Remember that once it's sent, it will be "out there" for good and that there is no getting it back.

Call to confirm.

It can be easy to rely on text messaging alone to make plans. But because cell phones can be lost and information can fall into the wrong hands, it's always safest to call and actually talk on the phone to the person who you are planning to meet.

Speak up.

There are some situations that you shouldn't try to handle alone. If someone refuses to stop harassing you by text messaging or if you're in a car with a driver who is endangering your safety by text messaging, speak up! Tell a trusted adult about the text messages, or let that driver know that their distracted driving makes you uncomfortable.

Keep your personal information private.

Sharing can be a good thing, but not when it comes to sensitive stuff like your Social Security number, address or passwords. Guard these and avoid letting them get out there for just anyone to get their hands on.

If you have sent an inappropriate image or text...**Taking the following steps may lessen the risk of future problems.**

- If you sent it to your boyfriend or girlfriend, ask him or her to delete the message from all phones, profiles or email programs.
- If you have sent an image or text that you feel is out of your control, talk to a trusted adult.
- If you feel pressured to keep sending messages, remember that you have the right to say no.

If you receive an inappropriate image or text...

- Do not forward the image to anyone. Think about how it could hurt the person involved.
- If the text is from a friend, tell the friend you do not want any more texts like that.
- If the texts keep coming, block that sender. "Unfriend" the person from your social networking account. You might also need to change your mobile number. If you do, make sure you only give the new number to trusted friends.

Name: _____

When it comes to sexting, the best piece of advice is to think carefully and ask yourself some important questions before you hit “send.”

Is this likely to hurt someone else?

What might seem like a harmless message might cause serious harm to someone else. When it comes to gossip and rumors, there is no such thing as harmless.

Could sending this hurt me?

Racy photos and language should have no place on your phone. You could do serious harm to your reputation and friendships by sending a message that is not appropriate.

Would this be better communicated verbally?

If you have a conflict or need to communicate sensitive information, it’s better to do it verbally, either in person or over the phone. It is easier to be clear, honest and respectful.

Why am I sending this message?

This might seem like a no-brainer, but it can be a good idea to pause and consider your intentions. If the reason for sending it is to hurt someone or get revenge, reconsider.

Could my true intention be misunderstood?

All the shortcuts used in texts and emails can cloud your message and make its meaning unclear. Avoid misunderstandings by anticipating them. Read your message over before sending it to see if it clearly communicates what you want to say.

Would I be okay if everyone ended up seeing this?

Remember that anything sent through cyberspace could potentially come back to haunt you. It is not uncommon for someone to intercept a message and share it with others. Imagining your message “going global” is a good way to make sure it is respectful and appropriate.

Name: _____

Cell phones are wonderful tools for many reasons, but they also present challenges. Here is a list of the most common mistakes teens make when using cell phones, along with tips for avoiding them.

Sharing Personal Information

Be vigilant when it comes to safeguarding information such as your passwords, phone numbers, addresses, Social Security number and bank account details. If these are stored in your phone, they can easily be accessed if your phone is lost or stolen. Explore your phone's security settings and consider setting a password that locks your phone when it's not in use. Avoid lending your phone to anyone.

Rumors

Think hard before you send out a rumor or piece of gossip into cyberspace. Once a message is sent, it can't be recalled or undone. Instead of acting in anger or haste, pause and think about how you'd feel if the roles were reversed. Use a little compassion and common sense.

Harassment

Sometimes called "textual harassment," sending unwanted text or chat messages from your phone can be illegal, depending upon where you live and what your message says. If you get an unwanted message from someone, save or photograph the message and tell the sender to stop immediately. If the messages continue, ask a trusted adult for help.

Sexting

We have already seen the consequences that sexting can have on a person's safety, reputation and friendships. What could happen if you share racy photos of yourself with a friend who later stops being a friend? The risks of social, legal and emotional consequences are not worth it.

Name: _____

- Assume that every message you send can be read by anyone.
- If you are ever pressured online, talk to an adult. Stand up for others who feel pressured or bullied.
- Keep your web page private and don't share your passwords.
- Never give out your ASL (age, sex, location) or any other personal information to someone you meet online.
- If you have a conflict, always try to solve it verbally, either on the phone or face-to-face.
- Never post anything online that you don't want the whole world to see and have access to forever.
- Never make a threat over the Internet, even as a joke.
- Don't engage in flaming, or sending messages while you are angry. Write a message, take time to cool down and then read the message again.
- Print out any threats you receive or see online and show them to a trusted adult.
- If someone says something to make you uncomfortable, sign off. Block the person. File a complaint with the site. You can report inappropriate behavior or concerns at <<http://www.cybertipline.org>>.
- Avoid chat rooms and never "go private" with someone you meet in a chat room.
- Keep your webcam unplugged when you're not using it. Never use a webcam with someone you don't know.
- Protect your passwords and change them frequently. Someone can log on to a site, pretend to be you and can trash your identity. Pick passwords that no one will guess and never share them with anyone other than your parents or a trusted adult—not even your best friend, boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Cancel old profiles and keep current ones updated with the correct email address. An old unattended profile can attract hackers.

Name: _____

Sexting is not the only form of online communication that can be destructive. When communicating with technology, it's important to always avoid any of these behaviors:

1. Spying on people by reading their emails, texts or online messages.
2. Stalking someone by sending constant messages or demanding to stay in constant contact.
3. Using messages to insult, pressure or harass someone.
4. Pretending to be someone else or using a fake screen name to send hurtful or inappropriate messages.
5. Sharing messages that were intended to be private.
6. Creating a website or online profile to target, threaten or humiliate another person.
7. Sending hurtful emails or IMs (instant messages). This includes enlisting others to send hurtful messages.

REMEMBER:

Law enforcement authorities can use digital "footprints" to track and identify the sender of harmful or threatening messages.

Name: _____

Not too long ago, the word “cyberbullying” was a new term to describe the way that a person might use computers and the Internet to hurt someone else. Today, thanks to advances in cell phone technology, the definition has been expanded to include cell phones. You might be a cyberbully if you use your phone to do any of the following:

- stalk someone
- humiliate someone
- harass someone
- impersonate someone

Cyberbullying can take many forms. It can be:

1. Stalking: This occurs when someone tries to spy on another person, often a girlfriend or boyfriend, by reading his or her email and other messages, and by sending him or her constant messages via computer, phone or via PDA devices demanding to keep in constant contact.
2. Pretending to be someone else, using his or her screen name and sending out obnoxious, nasty or pornographic messages that others will assume were sent by the targeted person.
3. Sharing messages that were intended to be private in order to expose or hurt the sender in some way.
4. Creating cruel websites to target and humiliate another person.
5. Nasty emails or IMs (instant messages): Bullies sometimes enlist their friends to send hurtful messages to their target.
6. Nasty cell phone messages: Both voicemail and text messages are used by bullies to keep harassing the victim.

REMEMBER:

All electronic messages leave a digital “footprint” that law enforcement officials can use to identify the sender of any nasty or threatening messages.

Name: _____

<<http://www.kidshealth.org>>

<<http://www.netsmartz.org>>

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OTHER PROGRAMS**Other Programs
from Human Relations Media**

<i>B Careful When U Txt: The Danger of Texting and Sexting</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Think Before You Click: Playing It Safe Online</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Am I Normal? Teens and Emotional Health</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Body Image</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Curriculum in a Box: Teen Challenges and Choices</i>	video/DVD/print curriculum
<i>Curriculum in a Box: Conflicts and Connections</i>	video/DVD/print curriculum
<i>Curriculum in a Box: Relationships</i>	video/DVD/print curriculum
<i>Dating for Real: Let's Talk about Sex</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Dating for Real: What Do You Want?</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Dating for Real: Putting it Together</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Test Your Fast Food Knowledge</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Five Essential Habits of Healthy Teens</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Drowning in D's: You Can Turn Your Grades Around</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	folding display
<i>Coping with the Body Image Blues</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>The Ten Signs of Relationship Abuse</i>	video/print or DVD/print

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