



FACT SHEET: TXTing/SEXTing

The Issue: Safe talk and text - the do's and don'ts of mobile phone use for kids.

Mobiles are a great way of communicating and keeping in touch with our kids when they are out and about. But mobiles can also be used for bullying or harassment. It's important that you and your kids understand what's safe and what's not when it comes to mobile use.

Textual harassment and Sexting are the two risk behaviours for teens and mobiles. So what are they?

1. **TEXTual harassment** are phone calls and messages that are used as a form of bullying. It's a serious issue and it's important to encourage your kids to report any communication that makes them feel bad. It's also good that they know they must also respect the personal space of others – that constant messaging or harassment by text, can be just as frightening as it is in person.

2. **SEXting** - is sending nude or semi-nude photos by mobile phone. Often, teenagers send explicit images to a partner or friends. Flirtatious game playing, peer pressure and competition are common motivations. What most teens don't know is that sending or receiving explicit images is a criminal offence and can lead to serious consequences.

Signs to Look Out For

Signs that your kid is being targeted by mobile misuse

- Suddenly avoiding friends and socialising
- Becoming disinterested in school, sport and after school activities.
- Changes in mood and/or behaviour such as anger and depression.
- Negative attitudes towards females (if male)
- Constant phone use

The dangers of textual harassment

As with all forms of bullying the impact on the victim can be severe. Poor self-esteem, truancy, eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide.

The dangers of SEXTing

- Your child can be harassed or bullied with threats to share the images
- The pictures can be posted online or shared publicly



- The image is shared publicly, with the suggestion that your child is interested in sexual contact.

TIPS - What you can do to protect your kids.

- Talk through the consequences of 'sexting', both posing for images and storing or sending them.
- Ensure your teen understands that once an image is sent, it can't be retrieved. Not only will it be available for others to see now, but also in years to come.
- Make an effort to become familiar with and understand the new technology your child is using.
- Encourage your teen to talk to an adult about any problems or concerns they may have. Reassure them that this won't necessarily mean they'll be made to stop using the technology involved.
- Make sure your teens understand that respectful behaviour is just as important when using mobile phones, and misuse can still have negative consequences
- Research shows that when parents put a limit on phone usage or the number of texts their teen's phone can send the likelihood that their teen will be involved in 'SEXTing' decreases.

Most mobiles now give access to the internet so check out the online fact-sheet about protecting your kids online (see Online Behaviours).

Help Is a Phone Call Away

If you feel you need some advice or support call the confidential 24 hour helpline 1800 200 526 to talk with experienced counsellors.

For more information check out www.bullyingnoway.com.au

What can I expect when I call the helpline?

Your call will be answered by a person, no answering machines, no recorded messages. The person who answers your call will be an experienced counsellor, not the police, not a government department.

You will not have to give your name, You can request a male or female counsellor.

They can also help connect you to other support services as needed.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) Phone 13 14 50

Hearing Impaired or Deaf Callers phone the National Relay Service 13 36 77 and quote 1800 200 526.