

SEXTING

PARENT/TRUSTED ADULT INFORMATION

A recent study from the Journal of Adolescent Health (JAH) found that 1 in 3 teens receive sexually explicit messages, and 1 in 4 send them. Sexting is becoming more common among adolescents, making it important for families to understand the risks and how to talk about it.

What is sexting?

Sexting is sending or receiving sexually explicit messages, photos, or videos through text or other digital platforms. Teens may engage in sexting to flirt, seek attention, respond to peer pressure, or take risks—behaviors that are common during adolescence. Many young people also perceive sexting as normal or “adult.”

Potential impacts of sexting:

- Once shared, images and messages can't be taken back.
- Content is often forwarded without consent.
- Some teens experience sextortion—being pressured to send more images or risk exposure.
- There may be legal consequences, depending on the situation and location.
- Sexting can affect relationships, school, and future opportunities.

How to talk to your child:

Start the conversation early – before an issue arises. Keep it open and ongoing.

- Ask what they've heard about sexting and what they think.
- Share your expectations and values clearly.
- Talk about consent and why pressuring others is not okay.
- Use real-life examples to discuss possible consequences.
- Emphasize that their safety matters and you're there to support them.
- Encourage them to pause before posting or sending and ask themselves if they are READY?
 - **Reasons to post** (Ask yourself, why am I posting this? If there really isn't a good reason, then maybe you want to think twice about doing it).
 - **Everyone's consent** (If there is someone else in a picture or if you are tagging other people, you should check with them first for permission).
 - **Appropriate for all** (If your grandmother, teacher, coach, pastor, younger sibling saw this post, would it be okay)?
 - **Does this hurt me or anyone else?** (Could this post come back and hurt you one day? Also, if this post could upset or hurt another person, it really shouldn't be online where it can be screenshot or forwarded to others).
 - **You can't take it back** (Once something is posted, it really is out there forever, even if you do take the post down. Even something that may seem harmless right now, may not be something you want to see pop back up a few years from now).