

Sending nudes and sexting

Studies show most kids say sexual messages are initially sent as a sign of love. For many teenagers, sexting acts as courtship and even as a replacement for sex itself. These messages can be a way to express and gain admiration from a crush.

However, with peer pressure and non-consensual sharing, your teen will need your help. Use this guide as a starting point to start the conversation.

- The term 'sexting' is not often used by young people or in popular culture. Young people are more likely to refer to other terms like 'sending nudes' or 'dick pics'.
- Sharing intimate images may seem like a bit of fun or innocent flirting for young people, particularly those in a relationship. But things can go wrong and it is important your teen understands this.
- Once an image is shared, it can be copied and saved by others, shared with people the sender doesn't know and posted on social media and public websites.
- Sometimes when a relationship breaks down, the ex may want to humiliate an them.
- The consequences can be serious, and teens who have engaged in sexting have shared that they have felt humiliation, guilt, shame, anger and self-blame — which can lead to ongoing emotional distress, withdrawal from school and family life and in severe cases, self-harm.
- A result of sexting is that it can damage to their reputation — it may impact on their reputation and performance at school, as well as employment opportunities in the future.
- Promote self-confidence and that it is OK to say "no"
- Explain that they don't have to send intimate images just because others do.
- Talk about ways your child can handle a request for a nude photo. They could respond in funny ways like sending a picture of some noodles or an animal.
- Help them understand the impact of sharing images of others and that they are breaking someone's trust - and the law - when they do this without their consent.
- Talk about what healthy and respectful relationships look like. Mutual respect, trust and consent are so important.