



Misusing Communication: Texting and Sexting

Next to talking one-on-one, texting is currently one of the most instant forms of communication. While texting might be the perfect platform to send a quick message; there are some things to watch out for in a textual relationship with your partner.

TEXTING TOO MUCH

If your partner texts too much, it's not only irritating, but unnecessary. Keeping in touch with your significant other throughout the day can be thoughtful, but constant contact is probably over-doing it. Consider talking to your partner about giving you a little bit of space. Remember, if they're using text messaging to monitor everywhere you go- that is a warning sign of abuse.

SEXTING

Does your partner ask for inappropriate pictures or videos of you? Or send them to you? Even if you trust that your partner will be the only one to ever see the pictures, you can never guarantee that they won't end up on someone else's phone or online.

Seriously consider playing it safe and making a policy of not sending and instantly deleting inappropriate photos. The same goes for webcams and instant messaging, too. Remember you never have to do anything you aren't comfortable with, no matter how much your partner pressures you.

SEXTING CAN ALSO HAVE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES.

Sending a nude photo or video of someone without their consent is illegal in Canada. If the person in the photo/video didn't give you permission to send it, don't. Also, any nude photos or video of someone under 18 could be considered child pornography, which is always illegal. Even if whoever sent the image did so willingly, the recipient can still get in a lot of trouble.

READING SOMEONE ELSE'S TEXTS

Does your partner ask to read your texts? Or read them behind your back? Healthy relationships are built on trust, not jealousy and control. You have the right to privacy and the ability to talk to whomever you like. You may want to explain to your partner that you have nothing to hide, but don't like them going through your phone or deciding who your friends are. If your partner refuses to change, you could be in an unhealthy relationship.



THREATS OVER TEXT

Threats over text should be taken seriously -- try not to write them off as angry venting. Keep track of threatening texts and think about talking to someone you trust about what is happening. Being in a violent relationship is dangerous -- *don't go through it alone*.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Whether you feel like your partner is already using their smartphone in an abusive way or you're trying to prevent it, here are tips to keep you safe and healthy:

- Remember, it's ok to turn off your phone. Just be sure your parent or guardian knows how to contact you in an emergency.
- Don't answer calls from unknown or blocked numbers. Your abuser can easily call you from another line if they suspect you are avoiding them.
- Don't respond to hostile, harassing, abusive or inappropriate texts or messages. Responding can encourage the person who sent the message and won't get them to stop. Your messages might also get you in trouble and make it harder to get a restraining order or file a criminal report.
- Save or document troublesome texts as you may need them later for evidence in case you file a criminal report or ask for a restraining order.
- Many phone companies can block up to ten numbers from texting or calling you. Contact your phone company or check their website to see if you can do this on your phone.
- If you are in or coming out of a dangerous relationship, avoid using any form of technology to contact your abuser. It can be dangerous and may be used against you in the future.
- It may seem extreme, but if the abuse and harassment don't stop, changing your phone number may be your best option. If you are feeling threatened or suffocated by your partner's constant calls or texts, it may be a sign that you are in an unhealthy and potentially abusive relationship.

When your partner says or does things that make you afraid, lowers your self-esteem or manipulates you, it is called verbal or emotional abuse. You have the right to be in a safe and healthy relationship free from all types of abuse.

You don't have to give up your devices or online presence if digital dating violence is happening to you. It's possible to use technology safely. Talk to your local anti-violence worker about how.