

# Sexting – What to Do If Your Teen Is Affected

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS INVOLVED

As every case will be different, your action in finding a suitable solution will be unique. Here are some strategies you can draw upon if your child becomes involved in sexting:

- Do not overreact—every case has varying circumstances.
- Talk to our child about what has occurred.
  - Your tone should be open and genuinely concerned (not angry, horrified, or accusing). This is about him or her, not you.
  - Listen and support.
  - Do not blame or shame your child. Mistakes happen, and they need to be able to come to you for help in the future.

Things you need to know:

- How old are the children involved?
- What was the intent?
  - Make someone like you
  - Prove how much they liked someone else
  - Thought it was a normal part of dating (This is a very common misunderstanding.)
  - ‘A bit of a joke’
- Why was this done?
  - Fun, curiosity, peer pressure, acceptance
  - Pressure from another (boyfriend/girlfriend)
  - For the other party’s benefit (extortion, humiliation, future benefits, grooming by an unknown adult—report to police)
- What type of material is it? Erotica (suggestive), naked, or sexual activity
- How long has this been occurring?
- How many images/videos are there?
- Who else may have them? How can they be sure?
- Have they been uploaded to the Internet or are they localised on devices?
- How did this occur?
  - Did they receive or send the material?
- How has the image been used?

- Forwarded, stored, shared
- To bully or extort
  - To keep your child in a 'relationship'—fear of leaving
  - To make your child do more—predators target your child, get one image, and then escalate
- What does your child want to happen next?

Once you have collected the information about the situation, you must decide how to continue.



## **The welfare of your child is your number one concern.**

### *Strategy 1 Deal with it in-house.*

- Delete material from the device.
- Block or delete contact(s) and/or accounts as necessary.
- Deal with your child through conversation, support, and maybe consequences.
- Monitor to ensure the practice has stopped.

### *Strategy 2 It's more serious, and we need others to be notified and involved.*

- During this process, be open, honest, and transparent.
- Ensure your child no longer has access or control over the material.
- Keep a record of what has occurred, including related messages.
  - Dates, times, content summary, people involved, program/device involved
  - Do not copy or forward any material that may constitute child exploitation material.

- Report to other necessary parties.
  - Schools and maybe other involved parents or families
  - Never contact other children involved directly.
- You or others involved may wish to contact police to inform or to seek advice.
- Depending on the circumstances, you and your child may become involved in a restorative process involving school or another family.
- If the material has been uploaded to the Internet, contact the website to have the material removed.
- Delete all offending material.
- Block or delete contact(s) and/or accounts as necessary.
- Deal with your child through conversation, support, and maybe consequences.
- Monitor to ensure the practice has stopped.

### *Strategy 3 Very serious matter*

Sexting is considered very serious when:

- It has been occurring for an extended period.
- It involves many images or videos.
- It poses a real danger to any child.
- There is a sinister or criminal intent.
- The materials involved are of an extreme nature.

Actions:

- During this process, be open, honest, and transparent.
- Be supportive, and seek professional help if required.
- Ensure your child ceases any continued involvement.
- Remove devices that are linked to the activity.
- Do not alter or move any content, including images, videos, links, or messages.
- **Contact local police or Crime Stoppers and report.**
- Should police determine that their involvement is unnecessary, consider steps in Strategy 2.

Report offensive or illegal material through the Children's Safety Commissioner:  
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/offensive-and-illegal->



[content-complaints/i-want-to-report-offensive-or-illegal-content](#). This need not involve your child.

Seek help – Encourage your child to seek professional help if necessary. (See the 'Where you can go to get help' fact sheet in the last module of this course.)