

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 over react—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.

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 Crimestoppers 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.)