SEXTING: NOT AS SEXY AS IT SEEMS

What is Sexting? It is a combination word made up of SEX and TEXTING. Anyone using technology for communication such as a cell phone, computer, e-mail, and/or social media account, is at some risk of being lured or tricked by a sex offender, at risk of being cyber-bullied, or at risk of falling victim to peer pressure associated with sexting.

SEXTING EXPLAINED

- Use of a cell phone or other similar electronic device to distribute pictures or video of sexually explicit (nude or semi-nude) images
- Receiving, copying, sharing explicit photos/text messages
- Made possible via webcams, chat rooms, instant messages, e-mail, cell phones

WHY DO TEENS SEXT?

PEER PRESSURE
1 in 5 teens say they have sent/posted nude/semi-nude pictures or video
Almost half of teens have received sexually suggestive messages
Half of teens who send messages/images do so even though they KNOW the content will be shared with those other than the intended recipient

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Many young people today may be more interested in casual sex than relationships.

- Images shared after relationship break-up
- Images shared to thousands of recipients in a matter of seconds
- Damaged reputation, gossip, harassment, cyber-bullying, depression
- Boys may expect girls who send images to “hook up” in real life
- Posted images/video cannot be retrieved once posted in cyberspace
- Embarrassment to family
- Risk of being declined from acceptance to colleges/universities, employment

LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

Any child under the age of 18 involved in any of the following can be charged and incur a criminal record, and/or be added to the sex offender registry list. Also, schools may invoke consequences such as suspension or expulsion:

- Making child pornography (taking sexually explicit material of anyone under 18 years)
- Distributing child pornography (sharing material)
- Accessing or possession of child pornography (having material on a computer or cell, looking at it, or showing someone)
- Luring (asking someone to engage in an act over the computer)
- Voyeurism (taking a picture or video of someone without their knowledge)
- Threats (telling someone their material will be distributed unless they provide more)
- Making sexually explicit material available to a child (sending adult pornography to a child)

SEXUAL PREDATOR DANGER

Young people are lured by adults pretending to be children. Sexual predators use fake photos, videos, and pre-recorded webcam videos. Messages, video, or photos can be captured with recording devices and screen captures, even from a live chat. Sexual predators can record and save material to use it against children later by threatening to expose material to family if the child does not provide more. Do you know who you’re talking to?
WHAT SHOULD PARENTS DO?

Teens will not likely respond well if asked pointblank, “Are you Sexting?”
Instead, try the following:

COMMUNICATE
- Keep informed about your child’s life: Who are their friends and relationships?
- Several small conversations will give a better idea of your child’s social life rather than one big interrogation
- If you learn your child is dating or engaging in sexual behaviours, have a talk about sex and include the topic of sexting
- If your child is not yet dating or engaged in sexual behaviours, have a discussion about bullying that addresses the use of text messages to harass or humiliate others

EMPHASIZE EMPATHY
- Urge your child to think before forwarding sexually provocative images of other people: How would they feel if it were their image instead of someone else’s?
- Consider the recipients reaction—just because a message is meant to be fun does not mean the person who gets it will see it that way
- Have your child consider the other people they can harm or embarrass by their actions—parents, grandparents, extended family, friends, etc.

21st CENTURY RESPONSIBILITY
- It is important to stress that responsible behaviour extends to the world of e-mail, text messaging, video chatting, and social networking
- Ensure your child knows that anything posted online or sent via cell or e-mail can be saved, shared, and virally disseminated across the Internet—friends, strangers, teachers, parents and future employers could potentially see images and videos
- Anything that is posted will never truly disappear, cannot be erased, and will not remain anonymous—not even the police can get the images back

HOW TO REPORT

If you wish to report a case of child pornography, or have questions for clarification about laws, you may contact the Hamilton Police Service.

Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-TIPS    Anonymous Tips at www.cybertip.ca    Facebook “report” setting

Webcams are the single most dangerous device to be attached to a computer.
Viruses can turn on webcams even if they are turned off.
Sexual predators can take screen shots or record video chat.
Unplug webcams when not in use, or turn toward a wall.
Webcams should never be placed in bedrooms.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION TOPICS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.HAMILTONPOLICE.ON.CA

TO BOOK A PRESENTATION, CONTACT HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE – CRIME PREVENTION BRANCH
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