



Kids Send Nude or Revealing Images

- 22% of teen girls and 20% of teen boys have sent nude or semi-nude photos of themselves
- 22% of teens admit that technology makes them personally more forward and aggressive
- 38% say exchanging sexy content makes dating or hooking up with others more likely
- 29% believe those exchanging sexy content are "expected" to date or hook up
- Revealing photos can be resent to a vast audience
- Sending a sexual image to a minor is illegal

What Is "Sexting?"

When people take sexually revealing picture of themselves and send them as text message attachments, it's called "sexting." And recently the practice has been increasing exponentially. Kids "sext" to show off, to entice someone, to show interest in someone, or to prove commitment. The problem with that, is that the moment the relationship ends (and most of them do) someone is in possession of a highly compromising image that can be easily posted on a social networking site or sent around via email or text.

There have been some high profile cases of sexting -- including *High School Musical* star Vanessa Hudgens, who sent a nude picture to her co-star/boyfriend, Zac Efron, that ended up all over the Internet and made headlines. And in July 2008, Cincinnati teen Jesse Logan committed suicide after a nude photo she'd sent to a boyfriend was circulated widely around her high school, resulting in harassment from her classmates.

Why It Matters

In a technology world where anything can be copied, sent, posted, and seen by huge audiences, there's no such thing as being able to control images. Even if a photo was taken and sent as a token of love, the intention doesn't matter -- the technology makes it possible for everyone to see your child's most intimate self. And in the hands of teenagers, when revealing photos are made public the subject almost always becomes the object of ridicule and name calling. Furthermore, sending sexual images to minors is against the law, and some states have begun prosecuting kids for child pornography or felony obscenity.

Advice for Parents

- **Don't wait** for an incident to happen to your child or your child's friend before you talk to your kids about the consequences of sexting. Sure, talking about sex or dating with teens can be really uncomfortable, but better to have the talk *before* the fact.
- **Remind them that once an image is sent, it can never be retrieved** -- and they *will* lose control of it. Ask teens how they would feel if their teachers, parents, or the entire school saw the picture, because it happens all the time.
- **Talk about pressures to send revealing photos.** Let teens know that you understand that they can be pushed or dared into sending something. Tell them that no matter how big the social pressure is, the potential social humiliation will be hundreds of times worse.
- **The buck stops with them.** If someone sends them a photo, have them delete it immediately. Better to be part of the solution than the problem. Besides, if they do send it on, they're distributing pornography -- and that's against the law.
- If you can't deal with this, **have your kids go to ThatsNotCool.com** (and you should go yourself). It's a fabulous site that gives kids the language and support to take texting and cell phone power back into their own hands.