



Sexting, Substance Abuse and Social Media

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Learning Objectives

- Look at the various definitions of sexting
- Examine some of the statistics and trends
- Discuss the legal ramifications for sexting
- Discuss the social and emotional ramifications
- How is sexting related to other risky behaviors such as substance abuse



Definition of “sexting”

- Text vs. Visual?
- Nudity vs. Partial Nudity?
- Self-created vs. Taken by someone else?
- Older adolescents vs. younger?
- Sending vs. receiving vs. forwarding?



Data and Trends

- Cell Phones and Social Media
 - 75% of youth age 10-17 have cell phones, nearly 90% by 17
 - Average number of text messages is 60 per day
- Mixed results but a definite trend
 - 2010- 2.5%
 - 2012- 28%
 - 2013- as high as 44% say they have participated in sexting if it includes text as well as images



More data

- Peak sexting seems to be 16-17, approximately 60% say they have participated
- 18% of high school students say they shared a nude image with others
- 36-39% says it is common for sexted images to be shared with people other than intended recipient
- 15% who have sent a pic sent it to someone they only know online
- Highly associated with sexual activity, but necessarily risky sexual behaviors EXCEPT FOR...



Girls

- 3x more girls than boys cited pressure from the opposite sex
- 4x more girls than boys send nude images of themselves
- Highly correlated with other risky behaviors
 - Early initiation of sexual activity
 - Multiple partners
 - Lack of protection
 - Using alcohol or drugs before sex
- True regardless of sending, receiving, or asked for a sext
- More at risk for social stigma vs. boys who are more at risk for legal prosecution



Legal Ramifications

- Is sexting illegal in Missouri?



Child Pornography

- Any possession of child pornography- any nude or suggestive depiction of a child (under 18) or a child engaged in sexual conduct is a crime in Missouri.
- Each image will result in a separate criminal charge
- Any distribution can also be charged with promoting child pornography
- Anyone younger than 14 is child pornography in the first degree
- Also charged with sexual exploitation of a minor- producing or creating explicit material



Sexual Misconduct

- Anyone to expose themselves to children under 15, or to persuade a child under 15 to expose themselves
- Includes electronic means of exposure or persuasion

- It is also a crime to furnish pornography to minors, or participate in a sexual performance viewed by minors.



Federal Laws

- Child exploitation laws
- Shipping, transportation, distribution, reproduction, etc.



Punishment

- Child Pornography is a felony
 - Up to 7 years imprisonment, or 1 year in jail and \$5,000 fine
 - Under age of 14, punishable by 5-15 years in prison
 - Making child pornography is punishable by 10-30 years to life
- Sexual Misconduct is also a felony
- Furnishing pornography to minors is a misdemeanor
 - 1 year in jail or \$1,000 fine



Sex Offender Registry

- All convictions under these laws must register as sex offenders in Missouri



Protected Class Principle

- Child Pornography laws apply regardless if the person committing the act is ALSO a child.
- No exceptions for criminal liability between minors and adults



Social Ramifications

- Embarrassment
- Sexual exploitation
- Commercial exploitation
- Harassment/ Suicide
- Lingering stigma of sex offender registry
- Many shared images are not able to be deleted and are accessible for years and open to the public



Association with Other Risky Behaviors

- No definitive evidence, multiple studies show different things
- However...
 - Higher association for girls with other sexual risk behaviors- found in 3 studies
 - Higher association with alcohol use found in 1 study
 - Higher use among already at-risk youth- 20% of at-risk 7th graders



Why might they be related?

- Risk often goes with risk
- Exploration of sexuality and adult experiences
- Regular consequences of poor social experiences



Not associated with...

- Socio-economic status
- Participation in school activities
- High grades/Achievements
- Race/ethnicity
- Family status



What does that mean?

- So common that the exposure is high regardless of other protective factors
- Many youth cite it as a functioning part of their relationship progression
- Extension of their digital and social interactions
- Method of exploring sexuality
- VERY unaware of the potential consequences



Call to Action

- Be aware but not prohibitive
- Discuss consequences, especially legal ones
- Engage lawmakers about sexting laws and punishments
- Get help for youth
 - Counseling
 - Medical
 - Legal