

SCRIPT #9 - Sexting and Managing your Digital Footprint FOR PARENTS OF TEENS



In this script, you are sharing your values about privacy, as well as responsible and respectful online communication. When preparing for this conversation, be aware that, culturally, we often place blame and responsibility on those who send the sext, and not on those who ask and/or pressure for a sext to be sent. This script addresses both. We need to be absolutely clear with our teens that it is never okay to pressure someone else to send a sext. In doing so, we are reinforcing that it's never okay for someone to pressure them to send a sext.

parent *I would like to talk to you about social media apps like Instagram and Snapchat, and how you use those apps to communicate.*

I know how to use those apps. You don't have anything to worry about.

teen

parent *I have a lot of confidence in you and the decisions you make, but it's a whole new world of communication, and I need you to hear my thoughts on this.*

Okay. What?

teen

parent *When you are not communicating face to face—and when messages can disappear in seconds—it can be tempting to share and say things you would never say or share in person.*

So?

teen

parent *So, I need you to know that in our family, we believe that there's a difference between things that are private and things that are not. Private messages can seem like they are private, but nothing online is ever truly private. For example, in our family, we do not believe that it is okay to send or ask someone to send sexy pictures.*

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE TO HYPERSEXUALIZED MEDIA AND PORN

OMG – so this is about sex again?

teen

parent

It's not so much about sex as it is about thinking wisely about online communication and managing your digital footprint. People have all different feelings about this, and you need to know that the devices we use in our family need to follow the guidelines of our family.

Okay.

teen

parent

My first point is that there is a family value here that I expect you to follow. But the next point is that it can be very risky to send any communication online. There is no privacy for what you post. Even if the picture or message disappears in seconds, a screenshot or photo can be taken before it disappears and can be used later.

I get that.

teen

parent

And not only that, if the photos involve someone underage, then the person possessing the images can be accused of child pornography. This has happened.

Okay, okay. You don't have to worry about this.

teen

parent

I'm glad to hear that. This whole issue can get really confusing. I also want to be clear that it's never okay to pressure anyone to do something sexual or to be sexually aggressive online. This may seem obvious when you are talking with someone in person and you can see their reaction. But online, you cannot read body language or know their response, so it can be harder to be sure of where that line is. I need to know that you will be able to stop before you cross the line, and find the words to let the other person know that there is a line you are not willing to cross.

You don't have to worry. I would know.

teen

parent

I think you would. But it's tricky. If someone is crossing the line, what would you say?

I don't know. I just wouldn't respond.

teen

parent

That's one option. But what if you needed to respond? Sometimes you have to actually let the person know your limits.

I don't know. I guess I'd just say, "Yeah, whatever. I've got to go."

teen

parent

That might work. Sometimes you might need to be a little clearer, like, "I'm not really cool with this conversation." Being direct, when you can, will have a longer-lasting effect on the other person. They are less likely to bring it up again.

teen

That sounds pretty lame.

parent

Yeah, you could also say, "My parents have access to my social media accounts."

teen

That sounds pretty lame too.

parent

Yeah, but in a pinch, you can always fall back on having horrible parents.

teen

I got it.

parent

Good. It's my job to help you think this through and let you know our family values for online communication. I appreciate you listening.

ACCESS OTHER SCRIPTS IN THE SERIES FOR PARENTS OF TEENS

Script #1 - What is Sex?

Script #2 - The Harms of Porn

Script #3 - Counteracting Media's Messages about Relationships

Script #4 - Communication and Consent

Script #5 - Sexual Decision Making

Script #6 - Understanding Sexual Pleasure

Script #7 - Biological Differences for Sexual Arousal

Script #8 - Protection and Contraception