

Developing Minds

Fall 2010

Texting Etiquette for Teens

By: Damon Korb, M.D.

I have been late to embrace many new technologies. In the '80s, I held on to my records refusing to accept the compact disc. I swore, "This new technology would never last." When email came out in the '90s, I chuckled at the techies who sat at their enormous computers to send messages to their friends, "What's a matter, too cheap to buy a stamp?" When my Hollywood buddy told me about Tivo a decade ago, I rolled my eyes at him. "If I needed to record a show I would use my VCR," not admitting that I never really learned how to program the thing. Eventually, I came around. I now appreciate my DVD's, email my friends to communicate with them more efficiently, and think that DVRs are a gift to parenting because my children no longer watch commercials. I was ready to embrace the new technologies...but then came text messaging.

As much as I tried to deny it, text messaging is here to stay. My teenage son frequently texts his friends, which has prompted me to realize that not only do I need to embrace this new technology, but we as parents have a responsibility to teach our kids how to use this technology responsibly and respectfully.

Texting has advantages, offering a quick, convenient and discrete means for communication. It affords the opportunity to simultaneously message multiple friends or contacts. Parents can use a text message to quickly locate their children. Most importantly, since so many teens "text", if your child is not doing it, he may miss out on some social opportunities.

As far as the risks of texting, most issues can be classified as simple faux pas or breaches of etiquette. However, in some cases texting can lead to serious problems. Texting can be addictive, because it is an easily accessible way to feel connected to others. Research conducted at the University of Queensland in Australia determined that text messaging is equivalent in addictiveness to cigarette smoking. I have had patients perform more than 5000 texts in a month, many during class time. Parents need to set limits, and if children are not using their phones responsibly, remove the privilege. Further, your child should know that text messages are traceable. I am aware of a student who was placed in juvenile hall for a few weeks after a text of passion was viewed as a threat. Another student sent a provocative picture of herself ("sexting") to a boyfriend. A week later, they broke up and all his friends ended up with a copy of that image. Once a message is sent, there is no deleting it. Since texts are permanent, anything they text they should be willing to share with their parents. In fact, I suggest that parents inform their child that they will periodically inspect their text records.

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Child Development Chats

The Center for Developing Minds hosts an informal and interactive session each month where topics including child behavior, development concerns and parenting questions will be discussed. Periodically, a session will focus on a specific area of interest. **Free of charge.**

Thursday, September 16
7:00-8:00 pm

"How Adolescent Development Shapes Behavior: Teen Parenting Basics"

Tuesday, October 26
12:30-1:30 pm

"Tips and Suggestions for IEP/IFSPs"

Wednesday, November 17
12:30-1:30 pm

Open Forum

Tuesday, December 7
7:00-8:00 pm

"How Parents and Teachers Can Collaborate to Address Students' Attention Deficits"

Lectures to Note

"Learning Disabilities: Facts and Fallacies"

October 2, 7:00-8:00am

Dr. Korb to present at the American Academy of Pediatrics Annual Conference, San Francisco.

Please see our website for the complete schedule, as well as more details on each of these events.

Facebook

The Center for Developing Minds is on Facebook.com. Become a fan by "liking" the site and receive highlights on your wall about current child development news and research, as well as upcoming CDM events. The site is designed to be interactive. Participants may post questions or information on the discussion board for other CDM facebook users, which will evolve into a valuable resource for families and CDM clinical partners.



Pediatric expertise in child behavior, development & learning
www.devminds.com 408.358.1853

Texting Etiquette for Teens Continued from page 1.

Here is a summary of some recommendations of practical rules for texting etiquette that can be discussed with your family:

- 1. Consider where you are text messaging.**
There are times and places for texting. Texting must be done safely; never while driving a car or riding a bike. It is not polite to text in a public place like a movie theatre, during a meeting, a class or a doctor visit (a pet peeve of mine).
- 2. Carefully consider the message that you are sending.**
Texting is a casual form of communication. It is best used for reminders or quick updates. It should never be used for delivering bad news or for anything formal, like breaking off a date, which should be done in person, or over the phone. Also, since text messages are often not kept secret, encourage your teen to avoid gossiping – you never know who is on the other end. In addition, remember that any harassing messages sent can be saved and then shared with authorities.
- 3. Do not include emotional content.**
It is very easy for harmful miscommunication to occur when you don't have the benefit of facial expressions or tone of voice to help you interpret the intent. A way around that is to only use messaging to communicate unemotional data. It is a great tool for making plans, but not so much for expressing your feelings. Never text when feeling angry, try to calm down first. Finally, avoid sarcasm because this type of humor is often misunderstood when messaging.
- 4. There is a hierarchy of communication.**
When communicating with someone, the highest priority should be given to in-person interactions, then video chat, telephone, email, and lastly, text. Text messaging should be brief. If your teen feels compelled to bond with a friend, encourage him to arrange a face-to-face meeting. If you feel you must attend to an incoming message, ask permission of the one you're with if you may respond to your device. Then tell the person on the device that you are in the middle of something, or busy, and that you'll get back to them.
- 5. Do not abuse the privilege.**
Regardless of your particular mobile service plan – even if your family has unlimited texting – it does not mean you must send an unlimited stream of texts. Use texting with a purpose and limit the amount of your day spent sending messages. Parents should institute text-free times, such as dinner and bedtime, when the phone is turned off.

Texting can be a safe, fun, and useful tool for the entire family. Of course, the best teaching method for your teen is to lead by example. If you don't want your kids to obsessively check their devices or to text during meals or conversations, then parents need to refrain from those behaviors as well!

THX4READING.

G2G.

TTFN.

Has text messaging helped your family communicate? Share your thoughts on the Center for Developing Mind's Facebook page: facebook.com/CenterforDevelopingMinds

New Research Study at the CDM

- ✓ **Do you have a 2-4 year old?**
- ✓ **Are you interested in learning about their language development?**

The Center for Developing Minds has a great opportunity for you!

We are collaborating with the LENA Foundation to explore early language development using their cutting-edge digital language processor – the LENA (Language ENvironment Analysis) System, the world's first automatic language collection and analysis tool – and we need CDM patients to participate in an easy-to-do assignment, conducted over a two-day period.

If you are interested or would like to learn more about this project, please contact the CDM coordinators:

Heather Erba at heather.erba@gmail.com or Natalie Fess at natalie.fess@gmail.com



The LENA Foundation develops advanced technology for the early screening, research, and treatment of language delays and disorders in young children. More info can be found at the LENA Foundation's website: www.lenafoundation.org

Welcome New CDM Instructor

Leina Ramos

Clinical Social Worker

Leina Ramos specializes in mental health services for children, adolescents, and their families. At the Center for Developing Minds, she facilitates social skills groups for children in Kindergarten through 4th grade. For the past 15 years, Leina has provided assessments and psychotherapy to children with emotional, social, and behavioral difficulties. She has worked in outpatient clinics for Santa Clara County Mental Health, EMQ Children and Family Services, San Francisco County Mental Health, and Edgewood Children's Center. She has also provided school-based mental health services in San Francisco, focusing on elementary and preschool-aged children. Most recently, she worked in Palo Alto for FriendSmarts, where she facilitated children's social skills groups.

For more biographical information about CDM staff, visit www.devsminds.com.

Upcoming Classes at the CDM

Meltdowns to Shutdowns

Emotional Regulation and Stress Management Group for Kids

Open to students, ages 11 to 14 years old.
Thursdays, 4:00-5:00pm



Meeting dates: Sept. 23, 30, Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov. 4, 11
Parent orientation: Tuesday, Sept. 21, 7:00-8:00 pm
Instructor: Cassandra Harms, Child and Adolescent Therapist

Many children struggle to cope with the stress created by the fast pace of their lives. Children with low thresholds for frustration, tendencies toward negativism, or difficulties tolerating losing or not getting their way, demonstrate this stress with an extreme emotional reaction (meltdown) or a closed emotional reaction (shutdown). This class will help children to learn to recognize their feelings *before* becoming overwhelmed by them. In addition, this group will:

- Discuss how kids can cognitively manage their emotions by realizing when they may be vulnerable to a stressful situation,
- Teach relaxation techniques, improving the children's ability to calm themselves, so they can make better choices about how to react in different settings,
- Recommend problem solving skills for the students to use in group situations.

Course fee is \$400.00 for the eight class sessions and one parent introductory session.

New Group!

Friendship Coaching for Girls

Does your daughter often complain that she is being "left out" at school? Does she have trouble figuring out how to fit in with her friends, misinterpreting social cues from her peers? If so, then this new "Friendship Coaching" group will help.

The social-skill demands ramp-up considerably for girls as they get closer to middle school. Research indicates that with insight and repetition, children can learn how to read social cues. In this dynamic program, each child will practice and observe role-plays, as well as have the opportunity to give and receive feedback from her peers. The instructor will provide critical advice and help facilitate the immediate, direct reactions among group members.

The new group will meet on Thursdays at 4:00-5:00 pm, from January 6 to February 10, 2011. The group is open to students, ages 9 to 11 years old. Course fee is \$375 for the six class sessions and the parent introductory session to be held on January 4 at 7:00 pm.

All classes are held at the CDM. Class sizes are limited to provide participants with personal attention. To register, or for more information regarding these classes, please contact 408-358-1853.

Social Climbers

New Social-Skills Group for Children

The CDM is offering a new group to help children learn and practice social skills in a safe, fun, and supportive environment. The group will benefit children who have trouble resolving conflicts with peers, who appear lonely and complain they "don't have any friends," who tend to be teased or "left out," or have trouble reading social cues or initiating and maintaining conversations with others. The ten-week class will address topics such as:

- Listening with your "whole body," using appropriate eye contact and friendly body language,
- Initiating and maintaining conversations,
- Joining and initiating play with peers,
- Playing fairly and following rules,
- Compromising and problem-solving,
- Dealing with teasing and bullying, Managing strong emotions, such as anger.
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These various skills will be practiced by using group activities, games, projects and role-plays. Weekly handouts will be provided, to encourage practice at home. A scheduled phone conference and a brief written summary will be given to parents, in order to track your child's progress.

Class size is limited to a maximum of four children per group, and the classes are grouped by age and gender. Open to students in kindergarten to 4th grade. Classes begin in late-September and run through mid-December, please see the CDM website for specific dates/times.

LET'S GET ORGANIZED

Support Group for Kids Who Struggle to Stay Organized in their Life

Open to students in grades 5-8
Thursdays, 5:15-6:15pm

Meeting dates: October 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov. 4, 11
Parent orientation: Tuesday, October 5, 7:00-8:00 pm
Instructor: Cassandra Harms, Child and Adolescent Therapist



Organization problems are common among students whose performance in school is disappointing. Even the most motivated of these children may find it hard to change their patterns of disorganization. These fun and encouraging groups will help students build new skills essential for good organization, while improving self-esteem in a supportive environment among students that struggle with similar issues.

Both of these groups will focus on your child's skills in attending, planning, time management, performance anxiety and memory.

As a part of the sessions, the participants will collaboratively plan an "End of Group, Beginning of Success" party as a concrete and enjoyable way to utilize their new organization skills. Course fee is \$375.00 for the six class sessions and one parent introductory session.



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NEED PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL TESTING?

SCHEDULE YOUR EXAMINATIONS AT THE CENTER FOR DEVELOPING MINDS



The Center for Developing Minds has licensed educational psychologists on staff who specialize in the administration of a wide range of educational, psychological and neuropsychological evaluations, including:

Academic Achievement Tests (such as Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery),
Intelligence Ratings (like the Wechsler and Stanford-Binet scales),
Attention and Behavior Assessments (e.g. ADHD rating and BASC rating scale), and
Adaptive Living Inventories (i.e. ADOS and Vineland Adaptive Behavior scale)

Once the CDM psychologists assess your child's learning abilities, they create an educational plan that targets your child's specific individual needs.

Remember, if your child qualifies for extended testing time on national examinations, like the SAT, current psychoeducational testing (administered within the past three years) must be completed several months in advance by licensed psychologists. Make sure your child's test battery is up-to-date!

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