



Sexting: the issues and how to address them

Abstract:

There is no doubt that thinking about youth engaging in sexting creates anxiety among adults. Sexting however, is common among both boys and girls, although sexts sent by boys are more likely to be forwarded.

For girls who send texts, there is more social disapproval and more harm done to them when sexts they have sent reach a wider audience than intended.

There is growing evidence that sending sexts is not, by itself, a harmful activity but rather it is sharing the sexts without the consent that may lead to stress and trauma.

The goal of this presentation is to increase understanding of why youth engage in sexting; what are the harms associated with sexting, and why we tend to blame the person who was victimized by sexting for having sent it in the first place and not those who shared the texts; and how we can intervene.

Key messages:

1. Sexting is here to stay and a part of adolescent relationships.
2. A nurturing classroom is one where teachers reinforce pro-social behaviour and self-regulation; monitor and limit opportunities for negative behaviour, minimise stress, and provide students with a sense of being cared for, valued, and appreciated.