

Texting, Sexting, Facebook and More
Top Ten Takeaways from Joani Geltman's presentation
October 2011

1. We need to teach our kids to be more mindful about cell phones - help them become more aware about how often and when they are using them. Let them monitor and see their itemized phone bills so they become aware of how much they are texting...guaranteed they will be shocked!

2. Kids behavior is driven by a real or perceived audience of their peers. This "imaginary audience" is vast and wide. Kids feel pressure and have a constant need to stay connected and outdo each other. They have a fear of being alone and feel the need to stay connected 24/7.

3. As children navigate the cyber world, parents need to educate them and give them the opportunity to learn. We need to teach them how to use it - much like teaching them how to drive. We wouldn't put them in a car without practicing or learning "the rules of the road."

4. Constant punishment for making bad decisions re: texting and social media don't work in the long run. Try saying "I get that you can get caught up with the group and want to do what everyone else is doing. Come to me so we can figure out the best way to deal with this." **Strategize together.** Punishment doesn't change behavior (taking away cell phone, grounding, no computer, etc.) and more importantly, it does not capitalize on the "teachable moment." Talking to your child and setting some limits for them does. Their impulsive minds need adult guidance.

5. Teens are under great pressure to do things on line they would never do in person (sexting, saying inappropriate things, etc). Adolescent brains have extra dopamine and adrenalin that contribute to their decision making - your reasonable child who always knew right from wrong is suddenly making uncharacteristically poor choices and exhibiting risky behavior as a teen.

6. Kids don't have the capacity to use sequential thinking...they don't think their actions through to the consequence. It is up to parents to help them anticipate how various situations may play out.

7. Research suggests that teen's brains need a break every day from all of the technology clutter. They cannot effectively process the constant information and need time to be alone. **Recommend that they are "unplugged" for 90 minutes per afternoon/evening and absolutely no phone to bed.** Also try making the 90 minutes of no screens a family-wide practice. Parents need to model this behavior.

8. Have an “out plan” with your teen. If they are ever at a party or social situation where they feel pressured to go along with the group doing something they are uncomfortable with (online or otherwise), have a simple, designated word for them to text you (Joani’s example: blue). You can then call or text and say you need to pick them up - that way you can get them out of the situation and they can still save face with their friends.

9. Discuss this check list with your kids and the importance of reviewing it BEFORE posting new information or photos on facebook or social media:

Can this post be misinterpreted by anyone?

Does this post intentionally hurt someone’s feelings?

Does this post give out too much information?

Can any photos posted of me come back and shoot me in the foot?

Post these questions at all computers that are used for social media.

10. Cell Phone limits:

- 1) no cell phones to bed - we are creating a population of children with sleep disorders
- 2) block photo capacity for younger teens/tweens
- 3) monitor activity with permission from your child
- 4) help with situations they do not know how to handle
- 5) limit messaging