

Sexting

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Abstract

This paper discusses sexting. The answers to what is sexting, the legal implications of sexting, how it affects each person sexting, and how, as counselors, we are to prepare to assist clients through sexting implications. The secular world and the Christian worldviews will be explored briefly. As a counselor, we are to examine the topic of sexting to help a client that may feel like a victim or a person that may be looking for help to stop the behavior.

What is Sexting? The U.S. court system defines sexting as "an act of sending sexually explicit materials through mobile phones." The messages may be text, photo, or video. (11 Facts about Sexting, n.d.) Sexting may be legal between consenting adults. In the case of children and juveniles, the courts set laws to protect minors. When should the court system step-in? Is sexting freedom of expression?

The Effects of Sexting

"The world has changed, and in the last ten years, technology has become so advanced that we no longer want to pick up the phone to call someone or even have a physical conversation with them because texting is just easier." (Forshee, 2018) Whether it is easier or not, texting is the new form of communicating. Just like a letter from a family member or friend, there was a boost of energy receiving someone's words in the mail; texting is a jolt, and sexting is the added jolt and can become addictive.

Sexting "can be addictive in itself as it produces sexual arousal and the resulting neurochemical high." (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011, p.387) The psychological effects of texting are similar to addiction because it releases the same level of the neurotransmitter, dopamine. The release of dopamine is higher during sex; in turn, the notion that sexting can be addictive can be more than just an opinion. The (Carroll, 2019, p. 447) textbook does not explicitly discuss sexting, and it does explain internet sexual addiction, cybersex, moving towards phone sex and face to face meetings, etc.

In (Englander, Ph.D., 2012), study it "revealed that most risk associated with sexting is experienced by youth who are coerced into sexting," requiring the U.S. courts to criminalize sexting bringing about feelings of shame, victimization, and low self-esteem. The U.S. Court system steps in when there is a present danger to provides regulations to protect those affected, such as children and juveniles. Sexting is illegal between minor to minor, adult to the minor, or minor to an adult. Here are different cases to consider and continue to discuss. The Miller Case, the girls who created images of themselves, and their classmates who circulated the photos without their permission were all handed the same punishment. They were to attend a "re-education" course and serve a term of probation. The Seattle case, two cheerleaders, were punished for creating images while the boys who distributed them were not. These are legal issues lawmakers need to address to establish a foundation of justice and protection. The opportunity to rethink the laws on sexting would rely on the concepts; for example, sexting is freedom of expression. Discussions on distributing without consent are criminal and or civil. Lastly is sexting a pathological behavior.

Counseling and Sexting

In counseling, a therapist must listen carefully to a client's motive for sexting what is it that the client gets from sexting or are the feelings of being violated in the digital world and a violation of privacy during what was an intimate private communication.

For those that are addicted to sexting, the therapy is behavioral, dialectical approach to achieving abstinence and create a new, more positive behavior. For those that are victimizing the approach can be a cognitive behavioral therapy achieve the goal of building up and a positive view of oneself.

The Formula

To become competent counselors in the age of technology and human sexuality as expanded the definitions, we should become aware and learn at the minimum when to help and when to refer. Preparation includes my reading, discussions with colleagues and continuing education classes.

As a Christian counselor, we have resources to also had to our toolbox, prayer, and Bible. If we are working with some that are not religious or do not believe in God, that is ok. We are to continue our path and show Jesus' love.

The book by Foster's (2018), *Celebration of Discipline*, we learn about Inward, Outward, and Corporate Disciplines. Inward Disciplines: meditation leads to prayer, prayer to fasting, fasting to studying, giving us discernment. Outward Disciplines: simplicity, we gain integrity; through solitude, we learn to be present with others, submission, and service we exercise humility. Corporate Disciplines: confessions releases to worship, worship to guidance. "All disciplines freely exercised bring forth the doxology of celebration." (Foster, 2018) The disciplines are to be practice throughout life. Each one of the subjects helps us become competent counselors.

Conclusion

Sexting is a new technology and is part of the world that we are exploring now. Sexting can be harmful and used as a weapon for revenge; this is where people hurt each other, and counselors can help—new issues, laws, and emotions requiring society to develop a foundation on how to process. In the secular worldview, the debates are about freedom of expression and expecting privacy, and we as Christian violations of ourselves and breakdown our foundation of respect and love. Christian have always explored vices as distractions to keep us from reaching our goal to be with our Father God.

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