

Why is texting so prone to addiction?

Researchers attribute it to a special form of “operant conditioning.” This means that texting behavior is shaped, or reinforced, by its consequences. If you receive a constant flow of pleasurable messages, one after the other, you would probably become bored and stop looking for them, since they are pretty much all the same in content. If most of your text messages are mainly mundane, but then you get one that is very exciting or interesting, this “once only” exciting message reinforces you to keep looking for the next exciting message, no matter how infrequent it is.

Texting Tips for Parents

1. Carefully evaluate the age of your kids when they start texting on their cell phones. Just because other kids in their class have it doesn't mean your child needs it.
2. If your kids do text, get an unlimited texting plan. Otherwise the charges mount up swiftly.
3. Make rules around when and where. No texting during meals, during class, on family outings. Oh, and turn the phone off at night.
4. No texting while they should be concentrating on something else. This includes driving- nearly half of teens admit to texting while driving, walking, and having a conversation with someone else. Firm rules about this will ensure their safety as well as their social skills.
5. Establish consequences for misuse. Want to make your point? Take their phone away for a week.
6. Watch your own behavior. Parents are still models for their kids. If you text your child while they are in class and then turn around and tell that child that he or she can't text in class, you are sending mixed signals.
7. If you suspect your kids aren't texting appropriately, you can always look at their messages. Yes, it feels like snooping, but our first job as parents is to ensure that our kids use powerful technologies safely and responsibly.