

# BE THE CHANGE

## PARENT LETTER 4: DATING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

In this lesson of **Safer, Smarter Teens: Be The Change**, your child learned about harassment, safe use of social media, and dating violence. Students learned that sexual harassment is any unwanted physical or verbal contact that is sexual in nature. The difference between flirting and harassment was clarified. Flirting is characterized as an interaction that is wanted and welcome, shared, feels good, is complimentary, and is safe. Harassment is unwanted and unwelcome, it is one-sided, it makes you feel bad, it is insulting, and it can be unsafe. The lesson also covered the dangers of dating violence, warning signs, and how to help themselves or others who might be in a dangerous situation.

### PARENT CONNECTION:

As your teenager gains more independence, there are increased dangers. Teenagers always think, "It will never happen to me!" However, the statistics say otherwise. According to the American Psychological Association, 1 in 3 teens will be a victim of dating violence. That is a startling statistic. Discuss with your teen the importance of looking for warning signs:

- Isolates you from friends and family
- Constantly checks up on your whereabouts or is controlling
- Insults you or uses put-downs
- Blames you when he or she treats you badly
- The relationship becomes too serious, too quickly
- Exhibits explosive temper or a history of fighting
- Refuses to let you end the relationship

It is important to continue to communicate with your teenager about safe relationships. While teenagers may not appear to seek parental involvement in their relationships, in fact teenagers are influenced by parental input. Parents can serve as a model for how to have a positive, healthy, and honest relationship. Teenagers often communicate more on their phones than they do in person. According to *Psychology Today*, 1 in 3 teenagers report sending more than 100 text messages each day. That can be more than 3,000 text messages per month. Teenagers and parents need to be mindful of what is being sent, as well as what is being received. Harassment can occur by phone, through social media, and in person. Help your teenager understand that any form of harassment is wrong. If your teenager or someone he or she knows is being harassed or is the victim of dating violence, help them identify whom to go to for help.

### TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY'S LESSON:

You and your teenager may be surprised by some of the statistics in the Cell Phone and Internet Survey. Take the survey together and discuss the information.

#### Cell Phone and Internet Survey

1. What percentage of high school students have cell phones?  
A. 80% B. 65% C. 50% D. 25%
2. What percentage of high school students have access to a computer at home?  
A. More than 90% B. 75% C. 50% D. Less than 30%

3. Who accesses the Internet more?  
A. Boys B. Girls C. Boys and girls access it equally
4. What percentage of teenagers communicate through social media?  
A. 95% B. 84% C. 68% D. 45%
5. What percentage of teenagers have had private or embarrassing information shared online without their permission?  
A. 40% B. 29% C. 19% D. 7%
6. What percentage of teenagers say they can text with their eyes closed?  
A. 72% B. 55% C. 43% D. 28%
7. Is a teenager more likely to call or text a friend?  
A. Call B. Text
8. How much time each day does the average teenager spend texting?  
A. Less than 30 minutes B. 45 minutes C. 1 hour and 15 minutes D. More than 1 hour and 50 minutes

#### Survey answers

1. A
2. A
3. 93% of boys and 92% of girls access the Internet
4. B
  - [www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media/Files/Reports/2013/PIP\\_TeensandTechnology2013.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media/Files/Reports/2013/PIP_TeensandTechnology2013.pdf)
5. B
6. C
7. 54% send a text message and 34% make a phone call
8. D – the average teenager spends 1 hour and 51 minutes texting each day
  - [www.cell-phone-parental-control-software-review.toptenreviews.com/are-teenagers-becoming-too-attached-to-their-cell-phones.html](http://www.cell-phone-parental-control-software-review.toptenreviews.com/are-teenagers-becoming-too-attached-to-their-cell-phones.html)
  - [www.psychologytoday.com/blog/teen-angst/201103/teen-texters](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/teen-angst/201103/teen-texters)