

Know the Signs: Spotlight on Nonstop and Excessive Texting

Twenty years ago, texting seemed like an impossible dream. Now, texting is a normal method of communication for many people, whether it's texting friends, family or a partner. Highlighting the hold that technology has on our communication styles, the [Pew Internet and American Life Project](#) conducted a study in 2010 that found young people ages 12 to 17 sent over 100 texts a day. They state it gives teenagers an "element of ownership" that is very different from calling someone on a land line, and with unlimited texting plans, it's no additional cost to parents.

That said, there is a cost when texting becomes out of control in a relationship. Texting, like any type of communication, has boundaries. What's the difference between a healthy amount of texting and too much texting? When it comes to texting, what constitutes abusive relationship behaviors?

A dating partner using abusive behaviors may use texting as a way to keep tabs on their partner. They may text constantly, way more than 100 times a day. The partner using abusive behaviors may look through their partner's phone and check their texts from other people. Or they may send negative texts that enforce abusive behaviors like verbal and emotional abuse. This can escalate into sending insults or threats via text.

When a dating partner uses abusive behaviors through technology like texting, it's known as digital abuse. A dating partner may use digital abuse to bully, stalk, intimidate or harass a partner. Texting is just one way a partner using abusive behavior can exert power and control over their partner's life.

In a healthy relationship, all communication is respectful. Keeping in touch with a dating partner throughout the day via text is fine, and texting often is okay, as long as all communication respects the other person. Sending texts that are loving and positive are healthy and positive ways to express love. A dating partner should not send texts that blame the other for a perceived wrongdoing, or use text messaging as a way to manipulate their partner into doing what they want. A dating partner should never threaten someone via text. It's not venting or blowing off steam -- it's still abusive, even if it's in a text message.

Both partners should also respect each other's boundaries. If one person wants to turn off their phone, that shouldn't be a problem. No one should feel as though they may be punished for not responding to a text message or turning their phone off. Boundaries also means respecting each other's privacy. No one should read a dating partner's text messages without their permission, or demand their phone's password codes.

If you know someone who is experiencing digital abuse, or has questions about texting and healthy communication, talk to them about their rights. Let them know they have the right to

wait to answer a text message and they are allowed to turn off their phone at any time. They never have to share their phone's password. If they have a partner who is texting them nonstop, they have the right to speak to them about this behavior and can talk to them about setting boundaries. They can also [text "loveis" to 22522](#) to speak with one of our peer advocates. Because everyone has the right to a healthy relationship, including healthy communication through texting.