



“Just send it”

Sexting lesson plan

Definition of sexting:

The term ‘sexting’ describes the use of technology to create and share personal sexual content. The content may vary, from text messages to images of partial nudity to sexual images or videos.

Synopsis of film 2: “Just send it”

Running time: 6+ mins



Abi and her friends love to live their lives online; sharing top tips, fashion ideas and fun stories. When her online comments catch the attention of Josh, a boy well known in the school, she is excited. As friendship grows and their like for each other develops, it’s not long before Josh’s friend encourages him to pressurise Abi to send a nude selfie. She’s not keen to do this and seeks the advice of her friends. Mixed opinion and increasing pressure from Josh soon encourage her to change her mind to take the photo. Although Josh intends to delete the photo, his friend Brandon intercepts the picture and sends it on to others online, which causes much distress for Abi.



Abi



Josh



Eve



Brandon

Key issues: healthy relationships, the law, peer pressure, consequences of sexting

Things for them to consider:

We are aware that not all schools will have an office labelled Head of Pastoral Care, as shown in the film. However, it is important to discuss with your students who they can talk to in their school about issues that worry them.

? Why do young people send sexts?

Some young people find themselves under pressure to send naked pictures of themselves, potentially to a boyfriend or a girlfriend. ‘Sexting’ is not generally a term that young people use, they may speak about sharing nudes or naked selfies. If clouded by peer pressure, young people may not consider the legal or reputational repercussions of sending a sext. Once they send a naked image of themselves, and if it goes online, it is very difficult to take back and can be easily spread around.

It is important to educate young people about how to resist peer pressure and maintain their self-respect, but also inform them that if they are under 18, sexting is against the law. If informed, the police will take a safeguarding approach towards those involved, meaning the priority is the welfare of the child/children involved. However, depending on the situation, young people need to know that there can be legal consequences and it is important for them to realise it is a serious matter.

? Is sexting common among young people?

A 2016 report from the **NSPCC**,³ Children’s Commissioner and Middlesex University found that 7% of 11-16s had shared naked or semi-naked images of themselves with someone else. Reports have indicated that sexting can take place prior to a relationship forming, or during it. The **Childline annual report**⁴ claims that it received 1,213 calls in relation to sexting in 2014/15 and the sexting page on their website is the most visited page.

? How should I speak about sexting?

As an educator, it is important not to normalise this type of behaviour. If it is suggested that ‘everyone does it’, young people may feel pressure to engage in this type of behaviour. Instead, **a blog from Mediasmart**⁵ states that educators must focus on helping young people recognise the signs of healthy relationships, so that they don’t feel coerced into doing something they don’t feel comfortable doing. Moreover, it is vital to avoid ‘victim blaming’ and discussions surrounding sexting should be seen as an ethical issue. A key focus should be put on those people who receive sexts and who choose to share the image around to others.

? Is sexting against the law?

If a person under the age of 18 takes and then sends a sexually explicit or partially nude image of themselves to someone else (potentially a boyfriend or a girlfriend), they have broken the law, under the Protection of Children Act 1978. If they take a sexually explicit image of themselves,

3: www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/i-wasnt-sure-it-was-normal-to-watch-it/

4: www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/childline-annual-review-2015-16-turned-out-someone-did-care/

5: <http://mediasmarts.ca/blog/sexting-and-youth-confronting-modern-dilemma>



they have generated an indecent image of a child. If they send it, they have distributed an indecent image of a child and if they have naked pictures of themselves or of other children on their device, they are in possession of an indecent image of a child.

The law is there for **child protection purposes** and the child in the picture is seen by the police as a victim in first instances. **Crown Prosecution Service** guidance states that children should not be prosecuted or criminalised unnecessarily:

“... the overriding purpose of the legislation is to protect children and it was not Parliament’s intention to punish children unnecessarily or for the criminal law to intervene where it was wholly inappropriate.”⁶

? If you’re aware of a sexting incident, what are your responsibilities as an educator?

Sexting is a safeguarding issue and also recognised **in an Ofsted report** as such.⁷

If you have a report of (or you suspect) a sexting incident, you should:

- Reassure the person involved and try to explain to them what might happen next.
- Act quickly and secure the device. This can ensure the image doesn’t get shared further. Do not copy, print or share any of the content, as this is distribution and so breaks the law.
- Seek advice – report to your designated safeguarding lead via your school’s safeguarding procedures.



If a school is concerned that external coercion was involved in the incident of sexting, or if the image was of a severe or extreme nature, a school can involve the police.

New guidance for schools was launched by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) in August 2016, **‘Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people.’**⁸

For more information, you can look at the UK Safer Internet Centre’s advice for responding to and **managing a sexting incident in school**⁹ and you can look at the South West Grid for Learning’s resource **‘So you got naked online ...’**¹⁰

? What should I advise students to do if their naked picture is leaked online?

Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) joined forces in 2013 to ensure that children and young people under the age of 17 know where to turn to for help to get sexually explicit images of themselves that are online removed. The remit of the IWF is to minimise the availability of indecent images of children on the internet. Childline is a confidential service, but to make a report on a child’s behalf to the IWF, they need to confirm who the child is and their date of birth. A Childline counsellor can explain the processes involved and will always try to help as much as they can. Childline is always open – call 0800 1111 anytime.

6: http://cps.gov.uk/legal/v_to_z/youth_offenders/#a29
 7: www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills-from-september-2015

8: www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis
 9: www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/responding-and-managing-sexting-incidents-updated-advice-schools
 10: <http://swgfl.org.uk/products-services/esafety/resources/So-You-Got-Naked-Online>