



Talking to youth about forwarding sexts.

A TELUS Wise® guide for parents.

Created in
partnership with:



As a parent, you may find some relief in learning that fewer youth take and send sexts (nude or semi-nude photos) than you may think. However, almost half of youth who have taken and sent a sext say that the recipient then forwarded that image to other people without their consent. This culture of sharing among youth is a major concern and can have devastating consequences for the person in the picture and the person who forwards it. We've created this guide to help parents and guardians start the conversation around sexting and healthy relationships, and help youth understand that forwarding a sext can do a lot of harm.

Starting the conversation

Note: not all youth will use the word "sext" – some call them "nudes," "nudies," "naked selfies" or just "pics". Even if you don't use the right word, your kids will know what you're talking about.

First things first, make sure that the youth in your life know that if they receive a sext, they should **never share it with other people under any circumstances**.

Why not? Because:

- Sharing or forwarding a sext of someone under 18 is against the law
- Sharing or forwarding a sext of anyone without their permission is against the law regardless of age
- Sharing or forwarding a sext hurts the person in it in ways that may last a lifetime
- Sharing or forwarding a sext without the sender's permission is morally wrong

Youth are more likely to listen when you tell them something is morally wrong than if you tell them something is dangerous or illegal, but a lot of people – both youth and even adults – sometimes make excuses for why forwarding a sext isn't wrong, which perpetuates the harmful behaviour.



Challenging excuses

MediaSmarts' study **Non-Consensual Sharing of Sexts: Behaviours and Attitudes of Canadian Youth** found that the biggest factor in whether or not young people who received sexts then shared them with others was whether or not they agreed with examples of moral disengagement about sexting. **Moral disengagement** is a term used to describe those sneaky excuses that we use to tell ourselves that it's okay to do something that we know isn't right, or to make excuses for other people when they do something wrong.

To help keep youth from falling for these excuses and sharing other peoples' sexts, we need to help them spot the common excuses and understand the detrimental consequences that sharing a sext could have for them, as well as the person in the picture.

There's No Excuse videos

This series of four short videos is intended to help youth recognize when someone is making a moral disengagement excuse about sharing and forwarding sexts, and shows why the excuse used really doesn't make sense - there is never an appropriate excuse for sharing sexts. Use these videos to start the conversation about sexting, then use the tips that follow to reinforce the message that it is never OK to forward or share sexts of other people.

Videos can be found online at [telus.com/howwouldUfeel](https://www.telus.com/howwouldUfeel) and are hyperlinked in this document as well.



Video One: “Everybody does it”

One of the easiest excuses to fall for is denying that an action hurt someone, or pretending that it didn't hurt as much as it did. Sometimes we do this by comparing it to something that's worse so that the thing we did looks better by comparison.

Youth might say, “It's not a big deal because...”

- “Everybody sends sexts these days. Nobody cares if one gets shared around.”
- “It's not a big deal to forward a sext if other people have already seen it.”
- “It's not as bad to share a sext if the girl who sent it to you wasn't your girlfriend.”

Parents can counter these excuses with statements like these:

- Not everyone takes and sends sexts (just a quarter of sixteen-year-olds have sent one). Besides that, sending a sext doesn't mean you want it to be shared!
- “Not as bad” doesn't mean “not bad.” Just because someone sent you a sext, it doesn't mean it's okay for you to share it.
- Every time you forward a sext, you're hurting the person in it. It doesn't matter if you're the first person to share it or the hundredth.

Video Two: “You should be thanking me”

Another common excuse is to say that you had to do something bad, or that it was okay to do it because it was for a good reason. That can sometimes be true, but we have to be mindful that we're not just falling for a sneaky excuse.

Youth might say, “It was for the best because...”

- “If someone cheats on you, they can't complain that you shared the sexts they sent you.”
- “Sharing and forwarding sexts just shows people what might happen if they take and send them.”
- “If somebody has shared other people's sexts, it's okay to share their sexts as revenge.”

Parents can counter these excuses with statements like these:

- It hurts when someone is unfaithful to you, but forwarding a sext can hurt someone for a lifetime.
- There are ways to show people that taking and sending sexts is a bad idea in a way that doesn't hurt anyone. (And besides, how is it your job to tell someone not to send sexts?)
- Two wrongs don't make a right!



Video Three: “I’m just the messenger”

Sometimes when we’ve done something we know is wrong, we look for excuses to say it’s someone else’s fault, or at least not our fault. We do this a lot when someone we like does something wrong, too, so that we don’t have to be mad at them.

Youth might say, “It’s not my fault because…”

- “If someone shares another person’s sext with just one friend, and that friend shares it with others, it’s not really the first sharer’s fault.”
- “It’s hard to say no when your friends ask to see a sext that you got.”
- “You can’t blame a guy for forwarding a sext. That’s just boys being boys.”

Parents can counter these excuses with statements like these:

- If the first person hadn’t chosen to share the sext, nobody else could have.
- It’s not always easy to do the right thing – but we have to do it anyway.
- There’s nothing about being male that makes it okay to share a sext of someone else.

Video Four: “It’s your fault for sending it in the first place”

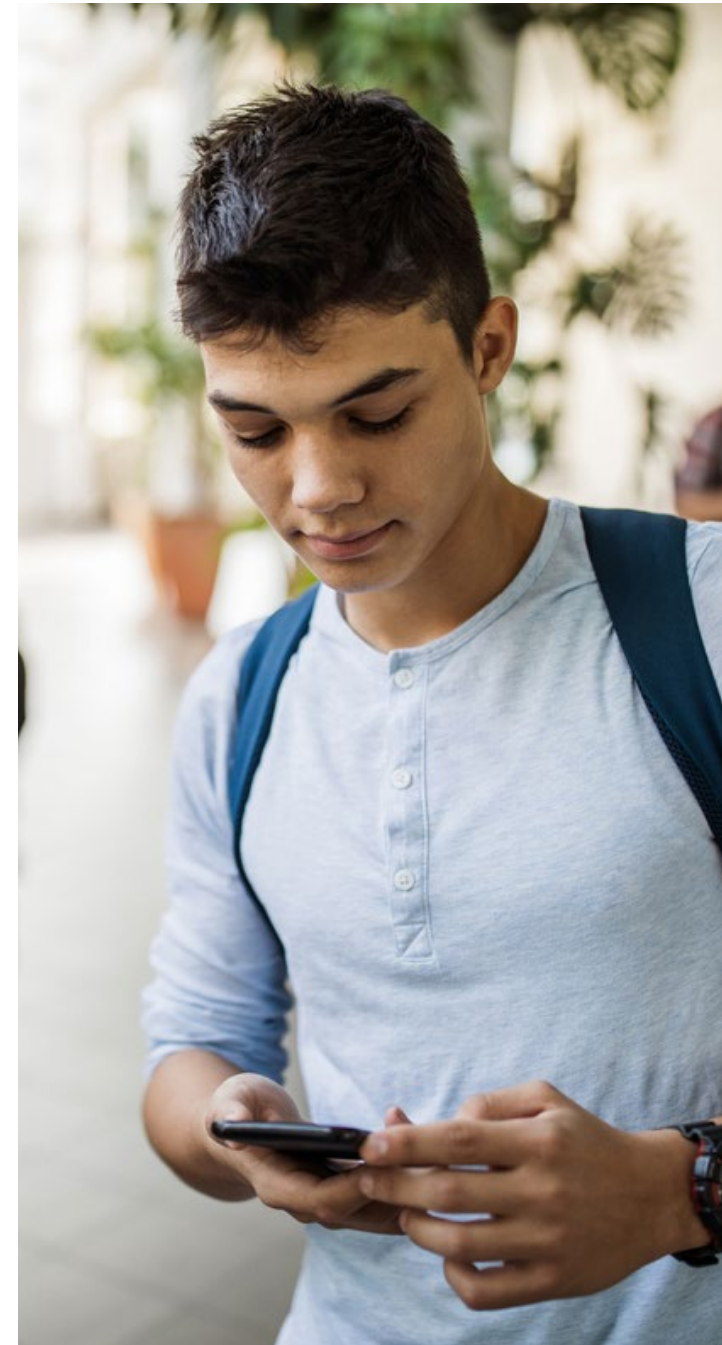
Sometimes we don’t admit that our bad behaviour wasn’t our own fault, but instead we actually blame the person who was hurt by what we did.

Youth might say, “It’s their own fault the sext got shared because…”

- “If someone sends a sext to a person they’re not in a relationship with, they shouldn’t be surprised if it gets shared.”
- “It’s not as bad to forward a sext if the person in it has already had sexts shared before.”
- “The kinds of people who send sexts don’t care if their sexts get passed around.”
- “What did they think was going to happen if they sent a sext?”

Parents can counter these excuses with statements like these:

- Sending a sext to someone you’re not dating might not be a good idea – but regardless, it doesn’t make it okay to share that sext with other people.
- Even if something bad has happened once before, it can still hurt each time if it happens again and again.
- Don’t assume you know what people do or don’t care about.
- If someone sent you a sext, what they probably thought was that they could trust you to keep it private. Do you want to be proven untrustworthy?

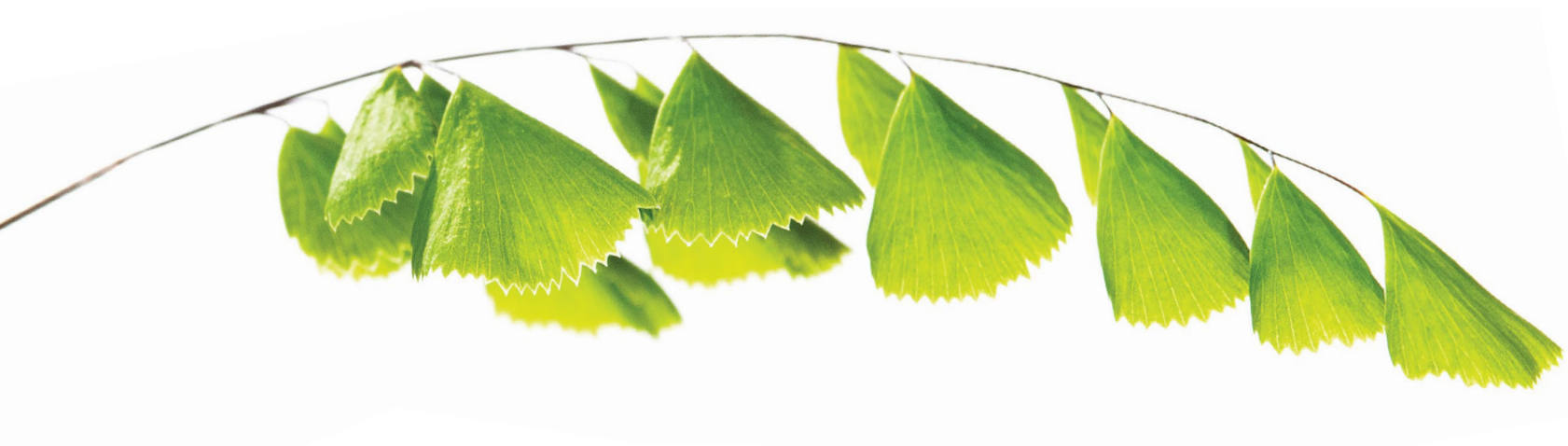




If you want to talk to your kids about the risks involved in taking and sending intimate images, see our tip sheet **Talking to Your Kids About Sexting**.

If your kids or someone they know have had a sext shared or forwarded without their consent, check out our tip sheet **Tip Sheet: Help! Someone shared a photo of me without my consent** to find out what you can do about it.

To find more resources on keeping your family safe in our digital world, visit the **MediaSmarts** or **TELUS Wise** websites.



How you can participate in TELUS Wise.

- Visit telus.com/wise to learn more.
- Book a free in-person TELUS Wise workshop for your child's school and/or parent group.
- Contact us at wise@telus.com.
- Join the conversation online with [@TELUS](https://twitter.com/TELUS) on Twitter and using [#TELUSWise](https://twitter.com/TELUS).