

Would I Have Sexted Back in the 80s?

“There is no clear cultural psyche for parenting digital teens. It is time we created one and brought some etiquette into our online world.”

Allison Ochs

Would I Have Sexted Back in the 80s?

*A Modern Guide to Parenting Digital Teens,
Derived from Lessons of the Past*

Allison Ochs

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To Markus, Carli, Moses, and Maya. And of course, to Mom, Dad and my ten siblings. I could not have written this book without you. I love you all.

A note from the author

I know you are possibly busy and tired. I get it, and this book was set up just for you. Talking to parents around the world, I have come to realize that parents don't want another academic book about raising a digital teen. What they want and need is hands-on advice. It should be short, simple, sweet, and to the point.

This book was set up with sections on topics that concern parents today. Feel free to browse, skip sections, and read whatever you need. If your child doesn't game – skip that section.

If you do, however, read the entire book and notice something is coming up in more than one section, it means I think this is extremely important. Important enough to repeat time and time again, making sure that whoever picks up this book will find that advice.

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Introduction

After a long day of presenting to teens about sexting, porn, relationships, and dating, I headed home. The radio was blaring in my car and an 80s song came on. Just at that moment, I started thinking of how things have changed since my teen years and about the boy I had a crush on.

I had to ask myself this question: Would I have? As I pondered, I found my mind wandering back to 1986, the music in the car helping me. Man, oh man was the boy I liked a looker! I saw him smile at me from across the hallway. He was wearing his letterman jacket; that was it... I was a goner.

I flirted, smiled, and did just about anything I could to get his attention. The amount of time I spent on my wardrobe during those months was insane. I was making some progress, he had taken note of me, he knew my name and talked to me.

I decided to join the indoor track team, for no other reason than to be close to him, he was on the team. That way I would see him at training. I wasn't very talented, had no chance of winning, but no matter, off to track I went, where I swooned over him as he bolted by me.

An out-of-state meet approached, and the only way I could go was to run the 400 meters. This was not what I did; I was a high jumper. I hated running and feared being humiliated, losing, falling on my face, but nevertheless, I told my coach, "Sure I'll run. I'll train and be just fine."

Why did I do such a stupid thing? That is a very easy question to answer... He was going, my heartthrob was going to go, and if I went it would mean I could possibly sit with him on the ride up to Boise, Idaho.

Not only did I go, but I also maneuvered my way into the car he was in. As we drove up I-15 direction Idaho, I sat in the front seat, he was directly behind me. The music was blaring some 80s hits, we were laughing, and he was playing with my hair, stroking it and talking softly. When we arrived at the hotel he asked me if I was coming to the pool. I quickly put my suit on and floated in the water with him. I was interested, excited, and giddy, so was he... Still, nothing happened.

The competition for this particular boy was fierce. He was a football player and good at it. What's more, his dad had been to Harvard – all the parents and other kids whispered about how he was not only athletic but smart like his dad. Everyone knew this magical boy, with his blond, slightly curled hair and quiet charm, was a good catch; a high-school girl's dream was wrapped up in this one particular boy.

I was not alone in my pursuit of him; he was playing the field before he decided who would have the 'honor' of being his girl. I knew I was in the running, almost there, but one other girl was in the race with me and giving it her all.

One Friday night, after a stomp (a dance after a game in the school gym) he walked over to me, "Can I drive you home?" Of course I accepted. He was shy, I was shy, and there we sat, parked in front of my house, talking. It was

electric. I could feel his body leaning in; I could feel his fear. He wanted to kiss me, I wanted him to kiss me, and I thought, “Could he possibly not know that I would do anything for him right now?” I was about to win; he was falling towards me, talking softly about school, nudging ever closer to kiss me. My heart was racing by now. I had never been kissed and to have a boy a year older kiss me, want me... And then, before he reached me, out of the blue there was a loud banging at the window of his car with an even more booming voice, “Yo dude, my sister needs to come in now. Ali, come on it’s late.” I stammered a “bye” and walked in.

I knew that was it. The other girl was his girlfriend by the end of the next week. My brothers, one in particular, scared him off. I have never forgotten.

Do you remember? I think we all remember that first love, that first flirt, and how scared we were. I lost that night. Having big brothers was a drag sometimes, especially when it came to my relationships with boys – but they sure kept me safe. They talked to me about boys, about locker-room talk and about what ‘boys’ wanted. As I complained, my brother scolded “If that boy liked you he would deal with me. He is some hotshot football player that is afraid of a big brother... Give it up Ali.”

He was right. I was too hard to get, and the boy didn’t want to try.

Now imagine another scenario. Let’s jump to today, 2018. That boy is still the jock, but now we aren’t sitting in the car, we are texting. He asks for a picture. Would I send it?

The answer: I think I would have hit send. Maybe not a nude, but something... Anything to get him to 'love' me. How about you? Would you have been tempted?

Spending so much time talking with teens and my children over the course of my career as a social worker/educator, I have realized some things haven't changed and never will; the desire for romance, connection, first love, and the fear of being embarrassed.

This book should do four things:

- remind you of your youth;
- give you guidelines for raising teens in a digital world;
- advise you on how to talk to your teens about their lives on- and offline;
- make you smile.

The internet has given today's teens the ease to communicate, but that doesn't mean they are having those real conversations with real people. They are still kids and just fumbling along like we were. We needed our parents, and our kids need us.