

Overexposed: Sexting and Relationships

Essential Question

What are the risks and responsibilities when you share online in a relationship?

Lesson Overview

Students explore the risks and responsibilities of carrying out romantic relationships in the digital world. They watch a video about a girl who sent a sext message to her boyfriend, which he then shared with others. After discussing the video, students create an ending to a story about a girl who is pressured to sext. They brainstorm ways to avoid sexting and to use digital technologies responsibly in romantic relationships.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- explore the role of digital technologies in romantic relationships.
- analyze risky forms of self-disclosure and their possible consequences.
- identify strategies for avoiding sexting while enhancing positive relationships.

Materials and Preparation

-  Video: The Dangers of Sexting - Downloaded from the AG Video File (link sent in email).

Note: This lesson deals with sexting, a sensitive topic that can be difficult for both teachers and students to discuss openly. Depending on your class's comfort level with the topic, you may wish to have students write down their responses to questions throughout the lesson, and invite volunteers to share with the class.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grades 9-10: RI.1, RI.2, RI.3, RI.4, RI.8, RI.10, W.3a, W.3b, W.3c, W.3d, W.3e, W.4, W.5, W.6, W.7, W.8, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.4, SL.5, L.4a, L.6

grades 11-12: RL.1, RL.2, RL.7, RL.8, RL.10, RI.1, RI.2, RI.4, RI.10, W.3a, W.3b, W.3c, W.3d, W.3e, W.4, W.5, W.6, W.7, W.8, W.9, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.3, SL.4, SL.5, L.4a, L.6

NETS•S: 1a, 1b, 2a, 2d, 4a, 4b, 4d, 5a-c

Key Vocabulary –

self-disclosure: sharing private, sensitive, or confidential information about oneself with others

reciprocate: to give in return

sexting: sending or receiving sexually explicit photos or videos by text message or other digital technologies

introduction

Warm-up (5 minutes)

ASK:

How do people in romantic relationships communicate using digital technologies?

Sample responses:

- Video chat, text, and IM each other
- Post messages on their blog or profile
- Upload pictures and video of themselves

How do people in relationships communicate differently online than they might face-to-face?

Sample responses:

- They can share things online anytime, which makes them feel closer, even when they're apart
- They might have misunderstandings because they can't see one another's facial expressions or hear tone of voice

Do you think the Internet and cell phones can have a positive impact on people's romantic relationships?

Students may say that cell phones, online messaging, and video chatting make it easier for people to keep in touch, even when they are apart. Also, people may feel more comfortable getting to know someone they are interested in over text, email, or instant messaging first. You have more time to think about what you want to say, and how you want to respond.

TELL students that you'll be exploring the risks and responsibilities associated with using technology in romantic relationships.

teach 1

Self-Disclosure in Relationships (10 minutes)

DIVIDE students into groups of three to five.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **self-disclosure**.

INSTRUCT students to work in groups to answer *one* of the questions below. Have one student from each group volunteer to be a scribe. (Note: In setting ground rules for the group discussion, tell students that they should be respectful of each other and never use real names or identifying details.)

ASK:

What are examples of self-disclosure?

Examples include telling a secret about one's self, or sharing information about one's family, childhood, hopes, dreams, fears, and feelings.

Can people deepen their relationships by self-disclosing?

Self-disclosure can bring people closer because it helps them learn about one another while also signaling trust.

Are there types of self-disclosure that people should be careful about sharing with others?

Self-disclosure about very private and personal things can make students feel exposed, especially if someone else doesn't reciprocate. There is a risk in self-disclosure because even if they trust someone, he or she might share that information with others.

INVITE the scribe from each group to share the group's responses with the class.

ASK:

How might self-disclosing using digital technologies be even more risky than face-to-face?

Explain to students that when they self-disclose something using digital technology – whether it is a text, message, photo, or video – it is even more risky, because another person now has a record of what they shared. They can copy, paste, forward, alter, tag, or share this information with others, even if you believe they wouldn't.

teach 2

Sexting: Risky Self-Disclosure (10 minutes)

KEEP students in groups.

ASK: *Have you heard about sexting? What is it?*

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **sexting**, building off of students' responses.

TELL students that they will watch a video on the dangers of sexting. As they watch the video, ask students to write down at least one thing that was surprising to them or one thing they could relate to.

 **SHOW** students the video “The Dangers of Sexting” (Downloaded from the AG Video File – link sent out in email).

ASK:

What was something that surprised you in the video?

Do you think this is an issue that high school students deal with?

Student responses may vary.

Do you think that sexting should be against the law? Is it currently?

Point out that, in many states, it is. This is because many states prohibit sending or receiving sexual images of minors (usually under 18). Some states have even prosecuted teens for child pornography or felony obscenity, and as a result, many of these teens are now on a list of registered sex offenders. When people sext, they put both the recipient and themselves at risk. Even if someone were to receive an unsolicited sext, that person could still face charges of child pornography.

teach 3

Positive Peer Pressure

Your friend is in a new relationship and tells you they have been asked to send a nude photo of themselves to their partner. What advice would you give to your friend?

Questions to guide discussion:

Can you name at least three consequences that could happen if someone sexted?

Students should be aware that a sexually explicit photo or message might be forwarded to other people's phones or computers, posted on social networks, blogs or websites, and seen by friends, classmates, teachers, parents, and strangers. As a result, the person would likely feel embarrassed and humiliated. Some people also might harass them. They might get in trouble at school and at home. They might feel like they shamed their family. They might be embarrassed if the sext turns up in the future. And, they most likely broke the law.

In the moment – when asked to, or asking someone to sext – why might someone ignore these consequences? Are there worries, pressures, or other considerations that come into play? What would it take to make someone think twice before sexting?

Students' answers will vary. They may point out that some people might worry about offending or disappointing their partner. They might worry about coming across as prudish, unadventurous, or uncool. Encourage students to recognize that people should never feel pressured into sexting.

closing

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Use the questions below to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives, or you can evaluate the quality and depth of their written and verbal responses to the student handout.

ASK:

Why is self-disclosing using digital technology risky?

Students should understand that anytime they self-disclose using digital technology, their self-disclosure can be copied, pasted, forwarded, altered, spread, or used in ways they didn't intend.

Why should someone think twice before sending, or asking someone to send, a sext?

Students should recognize that sexts can be copied, pasted, forwarded, etc. They should also recognize that they might regret requesting and/or sending a sext later on. Sexting is also illegal in many states.

Is it ever okay to sext? Is it okay to pressure others to sext?

Encourage students to think of the possible risks and consequences of sexting. Also encourage students to consider how attitudes about gender roles might come into play. Are the risks and consequences the same for boys and girls? Should they be? Students should be aware of the potential damage it might cause to themselves and others – including the legal implications.

