Texting isn't the same thing as talking

Most of us have thought of circumstances where we wouldn't use email or texting to communicate.

You've also probably noticed how using digital technology has significantly affected your children and your teens.

Do you feel that it's affected their social skills? Do you wonder if using technology so much for communication could contribute to problems like cyberbullying?

When you use a mobile device or a computer to communicate, what you say and how you say it changes simply because you are using a digital device. Learning HOW and WHY this happens can help you avoid problems online and through texting.

Digital communications are….
- Very fast
- Very easy – no envelopes and stamps, no hassle
- Quick and simple to distribute widely
- Because they're a WRITTEN form of communicating, texts or emails have a tendency to confirm and even inflate feelings – even ones you're initially tentative about.
- We also know that people have a definite tendency to say and do things online and through texting that they would never do in person!

What are some of the results of this?

Here are the facts that you need to make sure your child is aware of.

1.   **If you have a feeling and multiple people text you about it, those feelings will become stronger and more noticeable to you.**

For example, if you're annoyed with a friend and text some others about how you feel, and they text back with supportive messages, your feelings of annoyance won't DIMINISH; they'll actually grow STRONGER. There's nothing wrong with talking to your friends about how you feel. But if you're upset and you text about it, that could make you MORE upset in the long run.

2.   **Digitally, emotions are inflated – whether they're good or bad.**

If you're online or texting, you may find that liking someone a little feels like being in love; and being a little frustrated with someone could inflate into real anger. When you're going digital, you don't see the person in front of you; and without them in front of you, your feelings often get bigger and larger than how you REALLY feel.

3.   **Because the person you're writing to isn't in front of you, casual cruelty is easier when you're going digital.**

If you're hurting someone's feelings and they're right in front of you, you'll probably stop because of the look on their face. But if no one is there, there's no look that will cause you to stop.

4.   *Always* **going digital can affect your social skills.**

This can be good or bad, depending on the situation. Asking someone on a date is a hard thing to do, and it takes effort and thought to do it. Asking them by texting means you don't put in the same effort or thought, and your social skills don't improve as a result. Also, when you're digital, you can't read people's body language – and that means less practice in figuring out the useful clues we all get from nonverbal communication.

5.   **It can be easier to misunderstand people digitally.**

Because the written word doesn't always convey someone's tone of voice, it can be easier to start a misunderstanding. Before you get mad, ask yourself, *could I be taking this the wrong way?*

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Remember...It's all about awareness

Nothing is going to change these facts about digital communication. But if we are all aware of how "going electronic" changes our communications, then we can all guard against these tendencies when they're negative.

If your children are ever targeted by digital communications that aren't civil, remember how these are affected by the way they are written and sent! For example, it can help a target of cyberbullying to know how, and why, emotions can be so inflated digitally.

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Digital Communication Changes How We Talk and How We Listen

Key points that you and your child need to know to avoid

Problems with text messaging and online communication

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