



Deciphering teens' text messages

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TAMPA - We've evolved from the age of the Morse Code to modern day text messaging. we've always had codes in the way we communicate. However, the secretive language that teens use nowadays can be dangerous, and even deadly.

Criminal defense attorney Jay Hebert learned the dangers of teen texting codes during the Sarah Ludemann trial. His client, Rachel Wade, was involved in a tumultuous teen love triangle between Sarah and Joshua Camacho. It ended with Rachel stabbing Sarah to death.



LINK: Translate texts at NetLingo.com

[Watch the video!](#)

"They had a fight and unfortunately, for both girls, their lives were altered forever," he explained. "It's just two very, very beautiful, similarly situated young girls that fought over a boy, a boy that they never should've been fighting over."

Rachel left a threatening voicemail for Sarah that was played in court. In the message she said, "Please tell me Sarah why you would be a dumb--- and put a brand new picture of you and Josh at the beach on your MySpace. And I'm guaranteeing you, I'm gonna f—ing murder you."

The long and heated battle between the young teenagers lasted for months. "It involved texting. It involved Facebook. It involved MySpace," Hebert said.

It also involved a complex and ever-changing code, which Hebert discovered throughout the trial.

"FWB, friends with benefits. That was something that came out in the Rachel Wade trial," he said.

The attorney has now made it his mission to educate other parents about these teen codes. He does PowerPoint presentations to parent groups in an effort to raise awareness about this cryptic language.

"What does it mean when you text an asterisk and a dollar sign?" he asked.

The answer, he said, is pretty tame: "That is a simple text for Starbucks."

However, these codes go beyond the innocent "LOL or "SMH" messages that teens use daily.

"'420' represents smoking pot, and the reason why is that 4:20 is universally accepted as a time of day when people get out of school, so let's meet for a '420'," he explained. "When you text the number 8, it's code for oral sex. That's a shocking type thing that parents may not understand."

This list goes on: "53-X" means "sex", "DOC" stands for "drug of choice". Some of the messages could literally be a matter of life or death. "EOL" means "end of life."

The number "9", he said, "Means your parents are watching."

Parents should be watching, according to Aber. It's a principle he practices with his own son.

"We should trust our children, but we should verify. He can call it 'creepin,' I call it verifying, I'm gonna be in his business," he said.

Keeping up with the evolving teen codes can be challenging, so Aber tells parents to use websites like Netlingo.com to stay up to date.

"A lot of the lessons came directly from Rachel Wade. One of the things she said first and foremost is no boy is worth fighting over, and that's something very hard for an 18, 19, 20 year old girl to understand," he said.

He hopes other teens will walk away with this message, "We're telling young people that when you text, when you e-mail, when you voicemail, when you use this media to communicate, that is a permanent record. Forever means forever."

As seen here: <http://www.myfoxtampabay.com/dpp/news/local/pinellas/deciphering-teens-text-messages-02082012>