

Texting can be taxing - and even dangerous

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"Yeah, I guess I'm kind of addicted," said Taylor Davis, 15. "I text over 100 times in 2 days.

"I text more on my phone than I talk on my phone," said the Gilbert teenager. "I just always feel like I need to be texting."

And she is fast. You should see her fingers go. If you have a teenager, chances are you see the same thing . . . all the time.

Most kids never put their phone down - it's their oxygen line; without it they feel unplugged from the world.

Madison Boyd, 13, doesn't have her own phone, but she uses her mom's a lot.

"It's such an easy way to talk with friends and get information out," she said.

"But people do say things in texts they would never say to your face. My friends and I get in a lot of fights over texts," she said. "If we were just talking to each other, we would never say those things. It's just easier when you are typing it out," she said.

And dumb fights aren't the only problem.

"I get junk texts and forwards that are sometimes not appropriate," Davis said. "I just erase them but a lot of bad stuff goes around on the phone."

Haevyn Smith, of Gilbert, texts everyday before and after school. "I put my phone away during school," the 13 year old said.

But, most kids don't. There is a lot of texting going on under desks or in pockets. It is such a sneaky thing, many teachers don't catch on.

This can be a problem when it comes to test time and answers are texted back and forth.

It has also showed fatal when texting and driving are mixed.

Texting can also get dangerous when kids decide to be mean. Like the girls' said, it's much easier to say something nasty in a text than it is to someone's face. With just a few letters, someone could call you out to fight.

Just a few letters can say a lot these days. If your teen types: PAW CYT 143. Chances are she's talking to a boyfriend. She just said, "Parents are watching, see you later. I love you."

If you are looking to crack the code on your kid's text messages, there is a Web site, <http://www.netlingo.com/emailsh.cfm>, with a definition of most acronyms that can be a major help to those who graduated before 2000.

One great thing about texting is that it doesn't have to stay private. Checking your child's texts is easier than eavesdropping on the other end of the phone.

On their phone go to "Menu," "Messages," "Message Inbox," then click on each individual message. You may be surprised at the kinds of things that your little one is exchanging.

If you find something disturbing, don't blow up about it. Try to have a calm, rational conversation first.

You want your child to be able to talk with you about difficult things. Keep in mind, they will see this checking up on them as a violation of their privacy.

"It makes me so mad when my parents read my texts, because they were sent to me, it's private," Smith said. But, as a parent in an electronic age, you can never be too careful.

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