"Sexting"Outline and Objectives

Sexual addictions are not exempt from the ministry.  Pornography and sexting has been increasing among ministers to where it is a huge problem.  Pastors are on call 24/7 and use their phones constantly, which includes texting.  In a world that Christians tell one another "we love you" often but putting them in writing can take on a whole new meaning.

With endless texting, if not careful, texting can become sexting, which is inappropriate texting outside of a normal relationship with the purpose of flirting, using inappropriate language, graphic photos, and carrying on am emotional affair with someone outside of their marriage.  In simple terms, it is an affair, an emotional affair, that is usually conducted in secret but eventually becomes exposed, causing harm to everyone, including the church and community.  This outline will attempt to discuss the problem with sexting, steps needed to stop, and to prevent it from happening or going any further.

Some experts suggest that reasons for trying sexting in a relationship may depend on attachment style. There are three different attachments styles:

* Securely attached people find it easy and comfortable to get close to people. They don't worry much about abandonment.
* Anxiously attached people frequently worry about rejection and may have a desire to completely merge their life with someone else's.
* Avoidantly attached people are uncomfortable getting close to people and have a hard time trusting intimate partners.

Some people will try:

* Bring up something sexual you want to try.
* Mention that you’re thinking about the person.
* Talk about what you're going to do the next time you see your sexting partner.
* Mention your favorite body parts.
* Bring up a fun roleplay scenario.

When someone is texting someone else inappropriately, they never think about:

There’s also the risk that someone could accidentally see your sexts. Or that a third party could hack your sexting partner's device or cloud storage service and leak your data into the wrong hands.

**Is Texting Cheating?**

Inappropriate texting can be considered cheating depending on a couple’s boundaries around fidelity. Signs of a texting affair may include being secretive, keeping your phone down or out of sight, and flirting with others through text. If you think your partner is having a texting affair, it is important that you communicate and ask for clarification before reacting.

**Couples Relationship**

What is your love language? What is your partner’s love language? Helps you better understand and support each other.

**Is Texting Cheating in a Relationship?**

Inappropriate texting in a relationship can be considered cheating in a committed relationship, depending on how the couple define [infidelity](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/infidelity/). Cheating can come in many different forms, such as physical or sexual affairs, [emotional affairs](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/emotional-affair/) and [online affairs](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/online-affairs/). Usually, inappropriate texting, depending on the contents of the messages, are categorized as online or emotional affairs.

Couples usually have different rules and boundaries around what makes a person loyal and committed and what they consider a violation of that fidelity. However, a texting affair may start off innocently, without realizing the damage it may eventually inflict on the primary relationship and how it will impact the other person.

Some examples of texting affairs include:

* [Sexting](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/is-sexting-cheating/)
* Playful banter and [flirting](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/is-flirting-cheating/)
* Emotional, intimate connections via text
* Messaging others inappropriately using online texting apps (i.e., Whatsapp)

**Can Texting Lead to Physical Infidelity?**

Emotional infidelity significantly promotes sexual infidelity. When people build a connection and begin to open up and become more vulnerable, they will feel closer, which may develop into a physically intimate relationship. Texting can turn into physical attraction, as intimacy is often built on emotional bonding. If there is attraction towards that person prior to forming an emotional connection, forming a stronger bond may lead to physical infidelity. The attention someone gets from the texting affair can make it easier to become physical, as it provides immediate gratification.

**Can a Texting Affair End a Relationship?**

A texting affair can certainly end a relationship. As with all infidelity, it deceives their partner, which often leads to [trust issues](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/trust-issues/) in a relationship. Without trust, it becomes impossible to maintain a relationship. Also, becoming involved with someone else pulls the cheating partner away from their established relationship, leaving their partner feeling alone.

Texting affairs can impact relationships in many ways, including:

* Lack of trust can erode your relationship.
* [Resentment in marriage](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/resentment-in-marriage/).
* Emotional and physical disconnect.
* Lack of intimacy (i.e., [sexless marriage](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/sexless-marriage/)).
* Creates [jealousy](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/jealousy/) and [insecurity](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/insecurity/).
* Can lead to problems with [body image](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/body-image/) and [low self-esteem](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/low-self-esteem/).
* Leads to physical infidelity.

**7 Signs of a Texting Affair**

A texting affair can happen right under your nose if you are not sure what to look out for. Some signs may include the cheating partner fidgeting with their phone and becoming anxious if you look their way, hiding their texts from you, setting a new password suddenly, and blocking access to their devices.

Here are seven potential signs of a texting affair:

* **Setting a password:** Setting a password is not suspicious by itself, but when a partner changes their password, or sets a new password for the first time and refuses to share it with you, it can be a sign that they are hiding something.
* **Hiding texts:** They may flip their phone upside down whenever you’re around, or they may delete their text messages right before they spend time with you.
* **Becoming defensive:** Your partner may become defensive or project their own insecurities onto you when confronted. This can be in the form of them questioning you when they are using an electronic device to distract from their behaviors.
* **Becoming distant:** They may pull away from you as a result of the attention they’re getting from their texting affair, especially if they choose to spend more time out of the house.
* **Lack of emotional/physical connection:** If they are getting emotional or physical satisfaction from their affair, they may pull away from you and focus on building these connections with their texting partner.
* **Being dismissive:** They may dismiss your concerns around their new habits and laugh off any questions about infidelity.
* **Anxious around their phone:** They may fidget with their phone, change their settings frequently, or check it constantly for new messages.

## What Do I Do If My Partner is Texting Someone Else?

If you notice signs of inappropriate texting from your partner, it may be difficult to understand how you feel or know how to react. No one goes into a relationship asking for a person to lie to them, so it is normal to feel sad, confused, lonely, or stressed, but short of seeing an explicit interaction take place, talking to your partner is the best way to confirm the situation.

If your partner is texting someone else inappropriately, you may not know if you should leave or not and may feel insecure due to their partner’s actions. You should reach out for help from family, friends, and professionals. Remember that you always have the right to make the decision that is best for you, even if that means leaving your relationship.

Some important steps to take after a texting affair include:

### Have a Structured Conversation

Conversation regarding difficult topics can be intimidating for some; however, having [structured conversations](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/structured-conversations/) helps each person prepare how they want to express themselves. You and your partner can decide on when and where to have the conversation and discuss rules for the conversation. You can also prepare by making a list of topics that you feel are most important to discuss, and those that you do not want brought up. [Using healthy communication skills](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/how-to-communicate-in-a-relationship/) will help the conversation stay positive.

### Decide How You Want to Move Forward

When something happens in your relationship that breaks your trust, you should take the time to decide how you want to move forward–whether to stay in the relationship, your conditions for staying in the relationship, or when and how to break up, for example. Cheating can lead to [betrayal trauma](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/betrayal-trauma/) and [infidelity PTSD](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/infidelity-ptsd/), so if you feel like you are unable to forgive and forget as this incident of betrayal causes more stress to your life, you may benefit from deciding to leave and heal in the way you need. If you feel confused, you can also explore counseling with your partner prior to making a decision. You should take time to process your feelings and then can decide what you need and what is the best option for you.

### Rebuild Trust

After knowing that your partner has been involved in an affair, you may find it hard to trust them again. If you decide you want to stay in this relationship, there are many techniques that can help [rebuild trust](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/how-to-rebuild-trust/) in a relationship. Both partners should take accountability for their actions and commit to moving forward with open and honest communication. Rebuilding trust takes time, but it helps to set healthy [boundaries in your relationship](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/boundaries-in-relationships/), recognize each other’s efforts, and be consistent.

### Be Open & Honest

Being open and honest is important to build a strong relationship foundation. When you take the time to express yourself, even in difficult situations, you are showing your partner that you value them and your relationship. Sitting down to discuss any inappropriate texting and cheating will allow both partners to share their perspectives and understand each other better. The person who is cheated on should be able to ask questions that may help them heal but try to ask them in a non-judgmental way. The person who was texting should provide all information without being defensive, hiding, or omitting the truth.

### Create Boundaries

Setting healthy boundaries in relationships helps each partner to know what is and is not going to be tolerated. You should let your partner know whether you can meet their expectations and explain your perspective, and vice versa. This allows you both to explore compromises. For example, each couple may want to redefine the terms and conditions of using electronic devices and how they will each compromise certain behaviors moving forward in order to regain trust.

## When to Consider Professional Help

[Marriage & couples therapy can help after infidelity](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/marriage-counseling-infidelity/) by working to assess the couple’s relationship and goals prior to and following the affair. Therapy can facilitate non-defensive, empathetic listening between both parties, which often helps each person better process and move on from the infidelity. A therapist can also help the couple by reframing their problems in new, more effective ways.

It might also be beneficial for each person to receive additional support from individual counseling. This can help them to identify any triggers and help to find coping skills to address feelings associated with the infidelity, as well as reduce any relationship anxiety and feelings of betrayal. You can [find the right therapist](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/how-to-find-a-therapist/) by using an [online therapist directory](https://directory.choosingtherapy.com/).

## Final Thoughts

Inappropriate texting can impact your relationship by creating trust issues, lack of intimacy, building resentment, and encouraging jealousy and insecurity. In some cases, it can lead to physical intimacy outside of your committed relationship. If you suspect you or your partner’s texts may be crossing the line, you should first communicate your concerns to remove any unfair assumptions and avoid any misunderstandings.

**Grooming**

Though grooming can take many different forms, it often follows a similar pattern.

* **Victim selection:** Abusers often observe possible victims and select them based on ease of access to them or their perceived vulnerability.
* **Gaining access and isolating the victim:** Abusers will attempt to physically or emotionally separate a victim from those protecting them and often seek out positions in which they have contact with minors.
* **Trust development and keeping secrets:** Abusers attempt to gain trust of a potential victim through gifts, attention, sharing “secrets” and other means to make them feel that they have a caring relationship and to train them to keep the relationship secret.
* **Desensitization to touch and discussion of sexual topics:** Abusers will often start to touch a victim in ways that appear harmless, such as hugging, wrestling and tickling, and later escalate to increasingly more sexual contact, such as massages or showering together. Abusers may also show the victim pornography or discuss sexual topics with them, to introduce the idea of sexual contact.
* **Attempt by abusers to make their behavior seem natural**, to avoid raising suspicions. For teens, who may be closer in age to the abuser, it can be particularly hard to recognize tactics used in grooming. Be alert for signs that your teen has a relationship with an adult that includes secrecy, undue influence or control, or pushes personal boundaries.

## 20 Ways to Rebuild Trust in a Relationship

The good news is that even after a devastating betrayal like cheating, trust can be rebuilt.Not only that, but betrayal is also often the catalyst for reviving a relationship that was in serious trouble long before the betrayal occurred. Healing is a journey, but when two people are deeply committed to understanding, making amends, and recommitting, magic can happen.

Here are twenty ways to rebuild trust in a relationship:

### 1. Make a Commitment

Both partners need to commit 100% to doing the work involved in healing after a betrayal. It is a long-term investment, depending on the type of betrayal, but feeling the relationship is worth fighting for is the commitment both partners need to make.

### 2. Both Partners Take Responsibility

Commitment from the betrayer means proving to your partner that you are truly sorry and willing to work on earning back trust, no matter what it takes. Commitment from the betrayed involves active listening to the betrayer as well as exploring any of their own behaviors that may have contributed to distress in the relationship prior to the betrayal.

### 3. Refine Your Communication Style

Asking your partner open-ended questions is a great way to increase emotional closeness and rebuild trust. It fosters intimate dialogue since these questions can’t be answered with a simple “Yes” or “No.” How you choose to communicate grievances is what matters. Learning how to self-soothe can allow both the speaker and the listener to withstand the tension to process the betrayal.

### 4. Accept Repair Attempts

Rebuilding trust largely comes down to deciding whether you want revenge or a relationship. International marriage researcher, Dr. John Gottman, says that after a sincere apology is issued, when betrayed partners don’t accept repair attempts, there is an increased risk of divorce.

### 5. Set a Time to Talk About the Betrayal

It’s important to set a daily time (15-20 minutes) to talk about the betrayal; otherwise, it may be a 24/7 discussion. This allows each partner to prepare for a productive discussion as well as gain control of any emotions that may arise unexpectedly. Evaluate progress weekly to know when to decrease the frequency of the meetings.

### 6. Set Time for a Non-Negotiable Weekly Marriage Meeting

A weekly marriage meeting is a great ritual to strengthen a partnership. This is a dedicated time to be honest and communicate about key issues in the relationship. Good topics to discuss include appreciation, things that did/did not go well over the course of the week (in a non-critical and non-defensive way), chores, finances, external commitments, date nights, etc.

### 7. Redefine New Marriage Rules

Having self-imposed rules can help the betrayed partner to feel a sense of control while rebuilding trust. Self-imposed rules are freeing since they are non-negotiable and developed together. These can involve [setting healthy relationship boundaries](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/boundaries-in-relationships/) and daily check-ins to limit problems from escalating.

### 8. Create a Culture of Appreciation

Couples who find ways to express appreciation for each other often have a greater chance at repairing broken trust. This is about sharing a “we-ness” or togetherness vs. a separateness.8

Glorifying the struggle means expressing pride that you’ve survived major hardships in your relationship. Actively talking about your commitment to one another vs. questioning whether you made the right choice is instrumental in rebuilding trust.8

### 10. Stop All Contact with the Affair Partner

If there is still contact with the affair partner, recovery will be greatly delayed. This means ending all physical, emotional, and verbal intimacy. If the affair partner is a co-worker, the contact must be strictly business.

### 11. Share Any Necessary or Unplanned Encounters with the Affair Partner

This means there is an environment of full transparency if unavoidable contact with the affair partner has to be made. This comes along with a willingness to openly answer any questions your partner may have.

### 12. Don’t Gossip About or Trash Talk Your Partner to Others

Gossiping and trash talking create an added layer of stress, especially when the goal is to work on your relationship. It can be tempting to vent or want to vent, but it boils down to knowing that what you focus on expands, so choose who you talk to and how you talk about your partner wisely.

### 13. Tell the True Story of the Betrayal

Telling the story of the affair isn’t easy for either partner, but it will give you and your partner an opportunity to understand what happened and why. It’s important that the injured partner doesn’t engage in a destructive process of interrogation and defensiveness, which never promotes healing, even if the answers are truthful. Instead, begin with addressing the simple facts.

**Recovering From Infidelity or A Betrayal of Trust**

**Individual and Family Therapy** – With a Professional Therapist

### 14. Create an Environment of Proactive Transparency

Our emotions can get in the way of telling the truth and hearing the truth. Transparency keeps everything out in the open to facilitate trust and [stop over-thinking in the relationship](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/how-to-stop-overthinking-in-relationships/). Proactive transparency involves making the additional effort to highlight important things about the betrayal without waiting to be probed or asked. This builds trust and displays a readiness to be held accountable.8

### 15. Understand the Power of Vulnerability

In being vulnerable, you can create a level of emotional safety with your partner. It’s the primary way to strengthen a marital bond and keep love alive. It’s how you’ll be able to re-establish a secure [emotional attachment](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/emotional-attachment/) and preserve intimacy in your marriage. This goes hand-in-hand with proactive transparency.

### 16. Evaluate Your Questions

In order to ask constructive questions, the betrayed partner needs to pause and consider. Good questions involve considering how your question will help to understand what happened and why it happened. The goal is to ask thoughtful questions that prompt constructive responses.

Potential questions to ask yourself before asking your partner:

* Is the answer something I really need to know?
* Is the answer something that will help in my recovery?
* Is this question something that won’t be helpful?
* Will it fuel intrusive thoughts and triggers?

### 17. Evaluate Your Answers

The betrayer needs to answer any questions truthfully, but also with the lowest level of detail possible. The goal is to avoid any disturbing images the betrayed may have to deal with later on. Cheating has been associated with symptoms similar to [post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/infidelity-ptsd/) and [betrayal trauma](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/betrayal-trauma/), so too many graphic details may put a burden on the healing process.

### 18. Take Time to Forgive

It takes time to truly understand why a betrayal took place, so cutting the healing process short will not allow for effective recovery to take place. In other words, avoidance is never a strategy for healing, nor is forgiving too soon. Building a [secure attachment](https://www.choosingtherapy.com/secure-attachment/) to your partner means taking as much time as possible to fully process and work on better coping strategies to rebuild the relationship.1

### 19. Seek Professional Help

Often, a couple is so overwhelmed that they don’t know where to begin. This is where a couples counselor can be instrumental. They can guide both the betrayed and the betrayer to ask and answer questions in a way that facilitates recovery. They can guide couples with structure and a plan of action to slow down the process of healing to a constructive pace.

### 20. Plan, Plan, Plan

Work together to develop a plan to prevent further breaches of trust. Be open to identifying areas that may have created mistrust (withholding financial information, not sharing information in your daily living, spending too much time outside of the relationship, etc). Plan to increase friendship, create rituals of connection, and build a new relationship together.

## Final Thoughts

Rebuilding trust takes time, commitment, willingness to forgive, and an ongoing effort to prioritize the relationship, but the returns far exceed the investment. Remember, both partners play a role in rebuilding trust. The tips outlined above provide simple actions on the journey to strengthen understanding, communication, friendship, and healing.