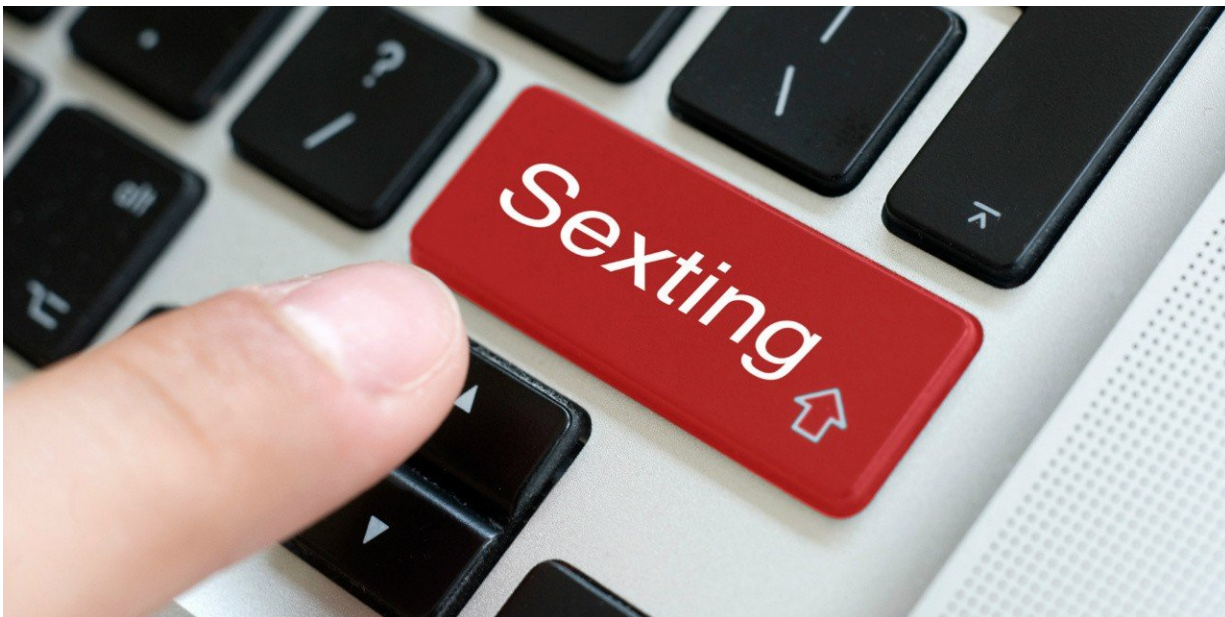


Lots of sexting can wreck a romance

January 30 2018, by Helen Metella



People who sext their romantic partners several times a week or daily report lower levels of commitment and higher degrees of couple conflict than those who don't send the suggestive messages.

Sexting—sharing sexual messages and images by cellphone or other web-connected devices—can spice up your sex life, but it may be at the expense of other important aspects of your relationship, says a new study led by the University of Alberta.

People who sext their romantic partner frequently—several times a week, sending both sexual words and nude or mostly nude images—or

hyper-frequently—daily or more often—report greater sexual satisfaction than non-sexters and those who send words only.

However, the frequent and hyper-sexters are also far less satisfied with many other aspects of their relationship, said Adam Galovan, lead author of the study and a family scientist in the Department of Human Ecology.

They have a higher degree of couple conflict and are more ambivalent about the relationship continuing than non-sexters, and also report feeling less secure attachment in their relationships and lower levels of commitment. In addition, they are more likely to view pornography and show more infidelity-related behaviour on social media.

"Sexting doesn't seem to be a feature of a healthy relationship," said Galovan.

"My interpretation is that the sexters are focusing more on the sexual part of their relationship and may be neglecting other areas."

This seems to be borne out by another finding in the study, he said.

The frequent and hyper-frequent sexters reported a high degree of "technology interference" in their relationship—texting or emailing during face-to-face conversations, meals or leisure time with their partner.

Evidence of letting technology take precedence over personal interaction may explain what is contributing to the poor scores in other aspects of their relationship, said Galovan.

"These folks want to get to the end goal—a good relationship—without doing the hard work of talking, listening and spending quality time together," he said.

"It's the instant gratification culture—we want it now. But it's what you do to get to that goal that actually defines a good relationship," he said.

"They need to put the phone down and have a good old-fashioned conversation—spend some time together nurturing the relationship—instead of shortcutting with [sexting](#) to try to get a quality relationship."

The study surveyed nationally representative groups of Canadian and American adults, all in committed heterosexual or same-sex relationships, of various ages, ethnicities, income and education levels. The criteria make the sample of 615 people far broader than most previous studies of sexting, which have more often focused on young adults or teenagers, said Galovan.

The research is also notable because it defined sexters more specifically (separating them into naturally occurring groups of non-sexters, word-only, frequent and hyper sexters), whereas in earlier studies, researchers arbitrarily grouped people into low, medium or high sexting groups.

Though the research was motivated by a desire to understand whether this relatively new and attention-getting phenomenon of sexting is healthy or problematic for relationships, the researchers did find that it is not as rampant as some media accounts may suggest.

"Non-sexters were the largest group—and most of the sample," said Galovan, "almost 72 per cent."

The study, co-conducted by Michelle Drouin of Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne, and Brandon T. McDaniel of Illinois State University, is part of The Couple Well-Being Project, a larger study exploring couple [relationship](#) dynamics.

It was published in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*.

More information: Adam M. Galovan et al. Sexting profiles in the United States and Canada: Implications for individual and relationship well-being, *Computers in Human Behavior* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2017.10.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.10.017)

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