



How to Ruin Relationships

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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When I first heard about text messaging, I wasn't at all sure that I would like or even use it. Now, however, I can honestly say that I see that it offers some benefits that I value. For example, I can send a quick text to my grandchildren to say I love them. (It's kind of like putting a sticky note in their lunch bag). When the weather is bad, I can easily notify people who care that I have arrived home. Travel photos can be shared in seconds and business information can be communicated rapidly even in noisy environments.

Yes, when used appropriately, text messaging can be a good thing. It also, however, can ruin relationships if you:

1. Let it take over your life - How many times have I heard individuals sadly state that someone in their life is "obsessed" with technology and this is hurting the relationship? If you cannot go anywhere without taking your phone with you then you might need to rethink your values.
2. Forget to pay attention - We have all witnessed people in restaurants who are so busy texting that they are ignoring the people who are sitting right across the table from them. When you are with someone - be there. I have a rule that if my granddaughter wants to use technology when she is with me, I will take her home. The goal of scheduling time to be together is to be together!
3. Use technology instead of common-sense - Sometimes I see individuals who are texting while standing in the aisles at the grocery store because they don't know which type of bread to buy. My thought is "Just make a decision!" The constant availability of technology has sometimes interfered with people being able to think for themselves.
4. Assume - Text messaging does not have any context or feelings. One short sentence can mean a number of things depending on the tone of voice and situation in which it is said. Try saying "I love you" with anger, for example. Now use a tone of sadness when saying it. Now say it like you truly do love the other person. Same words. Different meaning. Don't assume!
5. Try to carry on a conversation or argument - Some things need to be discussed in person. Misunderstandings occur or are made worse when you try to "short cut" face-to-face encounters.
6. Have expectations of the other person - Just because you are available to text doesn't mean the other person is. I remember talking with a former mayor who told me that he liked the "good old days" when he received a letter in the mail and had a couple of days to think about how he would reply. He explained that more recently people would email him in the morning and then telephone him in the afternoon to ask why he hadn't replied yet!
7. SEND too quickly - Texting occurs rapidly and sometimes people push SEND before proofreading or thinking about what they have said. Slow down!
8. Use it for inappropriate secrets - If you don't want your actions to be written as the headline of the newspaper, then don't do them. (You never know what will hit the press).

9. Disrespect or intrude on the other person's time - I didn't realize at first that when I would wake up in the night and send a quick text to my son in Saskatoon, the noise it made would wake him up. Oops!

10. Think that texting builds relationships - It can ruin them if you don't use respect and caring for the other person. Building relationships takes time and energy most of which needs to be done in person.