



## Letter to Students

### Lesson 3, Counselor Resource

Greetings!

Hopefully, you're starting to get used to letters from me around this whole issue of cyberbullying. This lesson goes a bit beyond the subject of bullying, however. In fact – the gist of this lesson is more on responsibility, education and a reasonable understanding of the legalities involved. Without meaning to be condescending to you – I actually believe that most of you take your cyber toys for granted. Take cell phones, for example. Even 10 years ago most kids didn't have them at your age. It used to be that it was a really big deal to have one. Not any more. The issue isn't that you have such an immense access to technology and all the different forms of communication though. We get that. No, the issue is that some of the things that you're doing with these devices are **dangerous, threatening and illegal**. The issue is that despite all the things you agreed to when you received them is that on some level you just don't get it and you are walking a scary path that we want to help you with.

The adults I work with have been having lots of conversations lately about the way that your age group uses your cyber communication system. We recognize that your generation has different ways of communicating with each other. We know that you laugh at us – and at your parents and think that we are impossibly boring and passé at times. Goodness knows that we can't keep up with you. Frankly, sometimes we do feel awed by all that you know. You're so good at unraveling technology and using it for your own growth and education and that is so cool.

You're also just a wee bit obsessed at times with some of the things that your cell phone can do. I had one parent tell me that their 14 year old daughter sent over 100,000 text messages out last month. He did the math and said that was about 1 message for every waking minute! Whoa! You're also using those text messages to initiate all kinds of relationships. As one friend said to me, 'It's the new way to flirt.' Some of your "flirting" is really dangerous though. We're hearing that it's not unusual to ask one another to send "pictures" over the phone. Frequently, we hear, these pictures are extremely provocative and racy. Some of the pictures portray nudity. Honestly, most of the adults I talk to and work with have been pretty shocked by some of the behaviors that we're heard about lately. We worry that you don't truly understand the ramifications of such behavior.

This lesson is meant to remind you about those ramifications and to re-educate you about the **code of conduct** that you agreed to when you signed up with any cyber site, device or game. Your teacher is going to go over some very specific laws and rules and depict some real life situations for you. We know that you've seen and heard things about this lately. I implore you to pay attention to this because your future is truly at stake. By that I mean:

- **Legal issues.** Kids are being arrested and prosecuted for sending and/or receiving inappropriate pictures on their cell phones.

- **Monetary issues.** The fines and loss of service that those convictions come with can be overwhelming.
- **Loss of Hope.** Kids are finding that inappropriate pictures and/or comments on MySpace (or others like that) can prevent them from certain job opportunities, receiving scholarships and even threaten college acceptance.
- **Loss of Reputation.** People are reading what you write. People are looking at what you post. Some of those people are parents; some may be teachers. Some may even be relatives or friends. Is that the message that you want them to have about you?

Please know that we recognize that the world is changing and you are part of that change. Here's a deal though– we'll promise to do a better job of listening to you and trying to see the world a little more from your perspective if you make a promise to us. We'd just like to ask you to trust us a little and recognize that a certain amount of wisdom does come from age and experience. Seek wise people in your life that will walk with you as you wander your way through these teen age years and move gracefully and firmly towards adulthood. We're truly all in this together.

Take care!

Mrs. G.