



**On my most recent cell phone bill, I noticed that my teenage son had 1500 text messages. Does this seem like too much?**

OMG (that is text talk for oh my god), 1500 messages sounds like a lot but it may not be. Consider that today's teen texts for a variety of reasons. How, why, and when your son communicates may be more important than the actual number.

Technology has changed the way modern day kids communicate. Where our generation spent hours gossiping on the phone, today's teen often chooses to engage electronically through text messaging. Balancing the demands of after-school activities, jobs, and homework can be complicated; cellular efficiency helps kids to stay connected to one another. In fact, many students actually define their social circles through broadband bonding. And parents can participate too.

Digital devices are getting smaller and cheaper. Parents should embrace these advances because texting offers an easy way to stay discreetly connected with your teen. Since friends won't know that your son is communicating with mom, he is more likely to keep you informed of his whereabouts. Texting also offers the added bonus of attitude free communication because you won't hear the "tone" of your teen's voice when he replies. This is truly a win-win!!

Managing cellular use is also an excellent way to promote fiscal responsibility. Speak to your teen about the cost of telephone technology and take a trip to the phone store. Would your son rather have more talk minutes or more text messages? Does he plan on downloading music or sending photos? Evaluate the different packages and determine what is important, what is needed, and what is affordable. Agree on how much your child will pay and the due date of his payment to you.

Cell phones may be a necessity but they are also a privilege. Developing specific guidelines on acceptable use will minimize communication controversy. Emphasize the importance of face to face communication and require your son to put the phone away during family dinner. Impulsive teens often text into the late hours of the night, so negotiate a phone curfew. Set up a charging area and require teens to "plug in" by a certain time.

I encourage you to learn how to text. It will keep you connected with your teen even when he is far away. Your son will smile when he gets a "good luck" message before the big game. Teach your spouse to text, and you will smile when sending him a message to pick up dinner on the way home.