



Kenny Alarcon is 16. He often texts with friends all night. “You get an urge,” says the Bronx, New York, teen. “When I get a text, I’m itching to respond to it even if I want to sleep.”

Franchesca Garcia is a high school senior from Providence, Rhode Island. We asked how many texts she sent and received each day. “I don’t know; maybe 1,000?” she said. “It’s too many to count.”

Teens are texting more than ever before. (See page 24 for a chart with teen-texting **statistics**.) Some experts say that all that texting could cause problems.

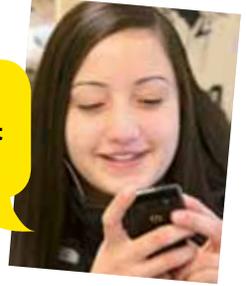
### Teens in Trouble?

Some say that students might not learn correct grammar and spelling if most of their writing is in text messages. Also, more time texting means less time talking with others in person. Experts say that



“My friends thought I was crazy for doing this. After I got my phone back, everyone was joking, ‘The ghost is back!’” —Kenny Alarcon

“When I gave my phone away, the first day I went crazy. I thought the phone was ringing but I didn’t have the phone!” —Franchesca Garcia



could hurt friendships and family ties.

Plus, texting (and using social media) takes up time. That time could be spent studying, exercising, or just having fun.

Dr. Elizabeth Dowdell is a professor. She works at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. She says that many people expect to be able to **access** anyone at any time. They also expect to be reached at all times. “It’s very appealing, especially to a middle or high school student,” she says. “The problem is, there’s no downtime.” And

people need downtime—especially for sleep.

### Sleep Texting

Both Franchesca and Kenny told us that they wake up at night to text. Kenny even sleeps with his phone under his pillow.

Dr. Dowdell says it’s common for teens to lose sleep because of texts. Sometimes teens even send texts filled with nonsense words when they don’t wake up all the way. She calls this trend “sleep texting.”

Why is sleep texting a problem? “Adolescents need a solid 8, 10, even 11 hours of sleep to really function and to think clearly,” says Dr. Dowdell. She adds that teens who don’t sleep enough may have trouble in school. They may become angry or **depressed**. Lost sleep

### Vocabulary

- statistics:** a set of numbers that presents information
- access:** reach, get in touch with
- depressed:** feeling very sad for a long period of time
- isolated:** all alone, separated from others
- addiction:** a strong need for something, such as drugs

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can also lead to weight gain. That's because many people turn to junk food for quick energy when they are tired.

## The 48-Hour Challenge

Dr. Dowdell says that teens need to learn that it's OK to turn off their phones sometimes. So we asked Kenny and Franchesca to do an experiment.

These were the rules: No phone for 48 hours. No computer or Internet use, unless it was for schoolwork. No Twitter. No Instagram.

Could the teens do it?

Kenny was worried. "I think I'm going to feel really **isolated**," he said. Franchesca was nervous but brave. "I'm excited for the challenge," she said. "I don't know what's going to happen."

The teens handed their phones to their moms. The challenge was on.

## The Results

We caught up with both teens after 48 hours with no phone. "It was pure torture," Kenny joked. Life with no phone wasn't easy. But, he said, "it had benefits."

Kenny missed his friends. He was sad at times. But he also felt relief from all the texting. "Sometimes it's teenager drama, people gossiping," he said. "I felt less stressed because I didn't have to be involved."

Instead of texting, Kenny went to the gym. He caught up on schoolwork. The first night, he told us, "I slept for 18 hours!" He also spent time with his family. His mom helped him with homework. "I felt closer to my parents," he said.

Franchesca gave an even happier report. "I loved it!" she said. "I was going to the gym and hanging out with friends and playing basketball. I had a wonderful experience." She slept better too.

Franchesca decided to leave her phone off for a while longer. "I think I'll be so much smarter and healthier," she said. "Everybody in the world should try it."

Kenny doesn't plan to give up his phone again. But he now knows he can live without it. "It was a reality check," he said.

—Sarah Jane Brian

## Signs of Addiction

Many teens report troubling problems when they try going without phones and technology. One recent study asked students to give up phones and electronic media for 24 hours. The result? One in five people experienced changes in their bodies or emotions that are signs of possible **addiction**. Look below for some of these warning signs.

