



WKBT's Lisa Klein explores text messaging in a two-part series to air Tues., March 10 and Wed., March 11 at 6 p.m. Learn its consequences in the classroom, the "codes" kids use, and the impact on kids' thumbs and tendons.

OMG! What are they saying?

The "secret language" of teens is revealed by our staff interpreter... as much as she could decipher.

by Lisa Grant

A few weeks ago, I got a call from a former student who is now a teacher herself.

"Lisa, my middle school students are driving me crazy!" she said. "They never listen, and when I scold one of them, all I get is an eye roll!"

I laughed and replied, "That just means they love you!"

As she recalled doing the same thing at that age, she joked, "I must have loved you a lot!"

Communicating with teenagers takes finesse, patience, and a willingness to learn. Adolescents no longer want to be treated like children, but not necessarily as adults either. Connecting with your child at this age requires a crash course in the "secret language" of teenagers.

Body Language

Teens actually do want to stay connected to their parents but keep them at arm's length, according to Sarah Johnson, therapist in Behavioral Health at Gundersen Lutheran in La Crosse. "It's a normal developmental path," Johnson says. "They are working to create an identity that differentiates [them] from their parents."

Nonverbal communication is an indication of those internal changes. Interpreting cues (such as the dreaded eye roll) as growth, rather than



disrespect, alleviates tension in the parent/teen relationship.

Here are some definitions of teen body language:

Eye roll – "I love you but you are being totally lame right now... I am listening, though."

Silent treatment – "I am angry, confused, or depressed, but don't let me stay this way. Keep asking me if anything is wrong, even if I repeatedly say 'no.'"

Grunt – "I realize you want a response, but I don't know what to say."

Door slam – "Leave me alone until I cool down. I'm too angry to talk right now."

Culture Club

Slang language, deliberately created to exclude parents, has been a tool of young people for generations. These expressions are often racy or humorous replacements drawn from modern cultural norms.

Although it remains to be seen if this new dialect will permanently alter language as we know it, parents should be aware of cultural terminology.

The following list should be used to understand what teens are saying, not so you can talk like them. Also, keep in mind, not every teenager uses all of these terms and, in some cases, teens may use a term completely unaware of its actual meaning.

Chillaxin: Hanging out and relaxing

Emo: Emotional; originally derived from the punk/hardcore style of music called emo; also used to describe a particular way of dress (tight jeans, band t-shirts, lots of eyeliner, unusual hair styles)

Fam: Family, friend, or someone you're closely connected to

Feel me: To understand or affirm

Goth: Derived from Gothic; refers to a person who exhibits an intimidating and depressing presence, usually dressed in black

Grill: One's face

Hit me up: Call me

I'd tap that: Indicating a desire to have sex with someone

Poser: Someone who tries to be something he is not

Pound it: A greeting, similar to a high five, in which you tap fists

Punked: To be embarrassed by someone else

Shut up!: A quick reply expressing disbelief, as if to say, "Really?"

That's what she said: Statement used to draw attention to a phrase that could possibly be interpreted as sexual innuendo

Wack: Un-cool or poor quality; something undesirable

Your mom: Retaliation to virtually any insult

Abbreviation Station

Today's teen relies on the cell phone or computer to communicate, resulting in the development of a type of shorthand.

Johnson suggests parents ask their kids to teach them how to text or instant message. Doing so provides an opportunity to talk and to learn the abbreviations your child is using.

Here are some common acronyms currently used in text messaging or instant messaging:

BFF best friend forever

BRB be right back

BTW by the way

FB Facebook

DOS dad over shoulder

IDK I don't know

L8R later

LOL laugh out loud

MOS mom over shoulder

NVM never mind

OMG oh my goodness/gosh/god

PAW parents are watching

POS parent over shoulder


TTYL talk to you later

UR you are

WTF what the f***

Building communication and respect before the teen years is crucial, according to Johnson. Striking a balance is important and that foundation will go a long way if conflicts arise later.

“Be involved and have regular, consistent contact,” Johnson recommends. “I’m a big fan of driving around in cars with kids. There’s no eye contact, and something about it feels safer emotionally for kids.”

The best part? You won’t even be able to see the eye rolling! 

Lisa Grant is a freelance writer who lives in Holmen. BTW, her husband thinks she is addicted to text messaging.

Visit cpclax.com for links to websites that translate slang, text messages, and online lingo.



First Lutheran Preschool

A nonprofit Christian education ministry of First Lutheran Church

- ♥ Now offering Public Pre-K!
- ♥ Socialization skills
- ♥ Sign language, literacy, art, music & dramatic play
- ♥ Chapel time
- ♥ Enrolling at 30 months to 5 years
- ♥ Large playground with bicycle track
- ♥ Now enrolling for the 2009-2010 school year
- ♥ Lunch bunch program
- ♥ Mon-Wed-Fri and Tue-Thur Morning sessions

First Lutheran Preschool welcomes students of all backgrounds and faiths.

608-779-4504 • 410 Main Street, Onalaska • www.flconalaska.org



When You Love to Shop, Shop the Best!

The latest styles, a great selection of stores, the freshest accessories and the convenience of the Valley View Mall Gift Card. With 80 specialty stores plus **Macy's**, **Sears**, **JCPenney** and **Herberger's** – come discover why you love to shop.

Mall Gift Cards & 80 stores you'll love!

Winslow's Hallmark • Hot Topic • GapKids
Talbots • Gymboree • Hollister Co.



3800 State Road 16 • La Crosse, WI 54601
608.781.4700 • www.myvalleyview.com
A Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust Property