

# Nursing professor claims teens are "sleep texting"

February 18 2013, by Bob Yirka

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Nursing professor Elizabeth Dowdell, of Villanova University has reported in an interview with a CBS news affiliate in Philadelphia, that she has discovered a new phenomena she calls "sleep texting." She says it's just like what it sounds like—teenagers sending text messages while at least partially asleep. She notes that it occurs when a teen receives a text, becomes aware of their phone beeping, and then responds—quite often with gibberish, but sometimes with words they never intended to use.

Dowdell attributes the behavior to overextended teens and says being partially woken by a beeping phone on a regular basis can lead to [sleep deprivation](#), weight gain, depression and other [mental disorders](#).

Dowdell doesn't cite any studies on this newly discovered side-effect of texting, but says she's found it occurs most often when a teen receives a message after falling into a [deep sleep](#)—usually an hour and a half to two hours after falling into their sleep cycle. Most report not being able to remember hearing their phone beep, answering it, or writing a reply.

She gives an example of an ex boyfriend or girlfriend sending a text in the middle of the night lamenting a breakup, provoking a response by the person suddenly yanked out of a deep sleep. Replies made while in such a state, quite naturally, can be quite candid and not framed in the same way were the person wide awake and fully cognizant of the situation. It's likely due, she adds to teens overextending themselves, or to being "overplugged," a term she uses to describe teens who are

constantly plugged into [social networking sites](#), text messaging or other forms of [social interaction](#) via electronic media. She doesn't say if she's seen instances of sleep texting in adults or how prevalent she believes it is among teens.

She does imply, however, that it appears teens who are somewhat sleep deprived appear to be more at risk of answering texts while sleeping than are teens who get the required eight to ten hours of sleep a night a teen naturally needs.

The answer of course, Dowdell says, is for teens to unplug at night, or to at least put the phone out of reach while sleeping.

**More information:** via [CBS news](#)

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