

Youth Culture Lesson
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Text Rage

Teen Beaten After Angry Texting

By Paul Asay

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What Happened:

Wayne Treacy and Josie Lou Ratley, both 15, never met before March 14. So what compelled Treacy to bike to Ratley's middle school, find the girl and kick her in the head with his steel-toed boots? **Text messages.**

Treacy was texting his girlfriend, a 13-year-old friend of Ratley's, when the confrontation began. Ratley took the girl's phone and texted Treacy, saying he shouldn't date someone so young. Treacy disagreed and the conversation turned ugly. When Ratley brought up Treacy's 28-year-old brother, who had committed suicide last fall, Treacy texted one last time, saying, "I'm going to snap your neck."

The boy, a ninth grader at Deerfield Beach High School in Broward County, Fla., then put on his steel-toed boots, pedaled his bike over to Deerfield Beach Middle School and began asking other students where to find Ratley.

When someone pointed out Ratley, Treacy walked over to her and without saying a word threw her down to the concrete and began to beat her. By the time teachers pulled Treacy away, he was kicking the girl in the head "soccer style." Ratley was rushed to a local hospital, where a piece of her skull was removed to release pressure on her brain.

On Easter morning, Ratley—in a doctor-induced coma since the attack—moved in her hospital bed for the first time. Doctors are still trying to get her to breathe on her own. Treacy is now facing a charge of attempted murder.

Talk About It:

"I think this is probably the first case of 'text rage' we've ever seen," Broward County Sheriff Al Lamberti told ABC News. Perhaps it was just a matter of time. Many experts say people are more willing to say nasty things in print—in texts or e-mail—that they'd never consider saying if the person was in front of him or her. Do you think people in general are ruder if they're not talking with someone face to face? Are you more or less polite when you're e-mailing or texting someone?

There's no excuse for Treacy nearly killing Ratley—no matter what Ratley said in her text, but does Ratley also bear some responsibility for what happened? Why or why not?

When you're angry with someone, what do you do? How do you manage your anger? Have you ever said or done anything in anger that you regret? If so, were you ever able to make amends?

What the Bible Says:

“In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Able and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was Very angry, and his face was downcast” (Gen. 4:3-5).

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it’” (Gen. 4:6-7).

“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let's go out to the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him” (Gen. 4:8).

“The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand’” (Gen. 4:10-11).