

## Why text messaging is a nightmare . . .

I can't begin to remember the number of times that I have had a text message that has gone wrong... it is utterly frustrating and happens too often for my liking.

The receiver will sometimes read into the xx's, the !!!!!'s and the words for clues to the real meaning. Have you ever had that sick feeling that goes with a somewhat negative text message? It really moves your emotions... so, Why is that? and How can we do it better?

### Communication...

Most of us know that in most communication, 55% is body language, 38% is the voice and 7% is the words or text.

### Communication without body language...

My simple understanding in life is that a conversation without body language is therefore just the voice and words (like being on the phone).

And yet of course, even that is not true because you can still 'hear' someone smiling down the phone!! It is also true that people like to present bad news and awkward conversations down the telephone line simply because they can't cope with a face to face meeting. Whilst the voice may not give away your true meaning, your facial expressions might. This is the reason why it is that many relationships have ended over the phone, rather than face to face. And, when you accept that unfortunately, in relationships that people very often have something to hide, maybe the easiest way to conceal the truth is behind the metaphorical 'cloak' of a telephone line.

### Now take away the voice, and you can see why texting is a nightmare...

The next step of course is to take away the voice altogether, which then leaves you with just the words/text. The common medium of communication here is the email and text message. Both forms are widely known for their slang and poor grammar as well as the lazy etiquette and style with which they are drafted. This is especially true when in this very time conscious age we find that a simple text message is an ample substitute for a conversation. Very frequently, questions and statements can be easily misconstrued. The question "Where are you?" can be stretched from a simple request requiring further information of someone's whereabouts, to a statement bearing accusation and aggression. The reason for this of course is because the intonation and emphasis is missing from the text. Are they smiling, screaming, questioning or loving in their approach – Who knows?

This is demonstrated amply when you consider the scrutiny put on text messages for the number of kisses or exclamation marks and the emotion in the message. I think you know what I mean.

Text messages when they go wrong are often perceived as being accusing, abrupt and leaving too much to the imagination (which can be useful on occasion).

### Summary...

In short, text messages are the simplest and crudest form of communication and are unique to the mobile phone. By the very nature of the medium that it travels, it means that you get the simplest of messages. Our language is far from simple and if you try to take the dynamics of the human body and the range of voice qualities out of the conversation then you're asking for trouble. It only leaves the 7% (words), which is not all that much to go on.

When you consider that a raised eyebrow says 50 times more than any text message ever could, then you see my point.

### My advice...

Read the text at least twice before sending it

Check the words for double meanings

Use descriptive words rather than simple words

Be careful about punctuation and use it for dramatic effect only

Use friendly words when it comes to questions – it makes them less accusing

Longer text messages are by their very definition less abrupt because they have more in them and evidently you have taken more care and time to respond

Use a symbol (smiley or something to convey emotion) to soften up the text

### Here's a gem that I made up...

***Keith, I fanc going out 2nite, WATRUDOINL8R? I want 2 C a film, B@THPICS4 7. The Bond film AFAIK is XLNT. Cud we do DNR L8R? I FANC a gud time, IUKWIM. NE way, HAGN, I'll CUB L8R. IWALU x***

### Or in other words -

"Keith, I fancy going out tonight, what are you doing later? I want to see a film, be at the pictures for 7pm. The Bond film, as far as I know, is excellent. Could we do dinner later? I fancy a good time, if you know what I mean. Anyway, have a good night, I'll call you back later. I will always love you x."