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**Antidote to Texting**

by Jerry Simon | [January 2013](http://www.ocjewishlife.com/site/stories/january-2013/) | [Post your comment »](http://www.ocjewishlife.com/site/antidote-to-texting/#respond)

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**If you parent** a teen, no doubt you’ve noticed that he or she has virtually abandoned the spoken word in favor of texting. The latest Pew Internet Research Survey says cell-phone-owning teens average 60 texts a day.

To help, the former Orange County Bureau Chief for KFWB-AM (Los Angeles) has created a face-to-face communications program for teens to move them away from texting and back to basic oral and written communication skills to prepare them for employment. Lori Kelman spent 35 years in communications management including radio/TV news stints (LA, NYC, Boston), director of media relations for the Port of Los Angeles, senior PR account manager for Texas Instruments and media relations manager for Fidelity Investments.

She recently rolled that professional expertise into an eight-module program for teens called “Enhancing Teen Communication,” and began teaching the program once a week at night to local teens (ages 12 to 18) in partnership with the City of Mission Viejo.

Teens learn resume writing, public speaking, interviewing, marketing (how to market themselves), broadcasting, news writing, public relations and media relations. Each module focuses on one topic, and the instruction involves interactive role-play to give each student an individual “takeaway” from the program.

“I wanted to ensure that every student actually experienced each component of the program first-hand,” said Kelman.

E-T-C was so popular – and the teen need was so great – the program immediately garnered widespread media coverage from CNN, KABC-TV, KNBC-TV, KFWB-AM, *The Orange County Register*, and other media outlets nationwide.

“That attention told me this was about far more than helping a few kids in my own backyard,” said Kelman. “I quickly realized I was addressing a nationwide need for teens, so I formed an LLC.”

The E-T-C website, www.enhancingteencommunication.com, showcases media clips, student testimonials and photos of students she’s taken on field trips to tour KFWB-AM and KNX-AM.

Additionally, Kelman has made the program available online to teens nationwide (on website) in multiple formats including a training manual, CD, and MP3 download. Each version includes interactive practice exercises.

“My goal has always been to make this education available to as many teens as possible, and I wanted those who didn’t live in Mission Viejo to have a way to get it,” said Kelman.

She also provides individual training to students via Skype, and train-the-trainer programs for instructors around the country who want to implement the program in their own classrooms.

“The individualized instruction meets the needs of students who aren’t completely comfortable speaking in front of others, and need a little extra T-L-C,” said Kelman. “The results are heartwarming.

“I constantly get calls from moms at their wits end, crying over their inability to get their child to communicate to them or their teacher, and after just a few Skype sessions with me the moms tell me their children are getting praise from their teachers following a complete turnaround in class. That’s why I do this. The opportunity to give back and make that kind of a difference for others is a true blessing,” said Kelman, “and I have the unique gift of being able to relate to teens in their way and on their terms.”

Her goal is to get this program into public schools around the country to provide what teens so badly need before they graduate but aren’t getting in class. Plans are in the works to launch “Enhancing Teen Communication” next month at a high school in south Orange County.

“This is just the start. Once I introduce it into the schools, the nationwide media coverage will explode and schools all over the country will hear about it and want it,” said Kelman.

“There’s no other program as comprehensive for teens. There are others that focus on one or two components, but they don’t cover the entire communications spectrum – and that’s what the kids tell me they need.”

Kelman is now looking for a corporation or individual to sponsor the program, and provide the funding needed to push the program out to schools nationwide.

“The nationwide PR exposure for whoever comes forward to do that will be incredible – not to mention the part they’ll play in shaping young lives,” said Kelman.

Since forming her LLC, Kelman has created a nonprofit called ETC HELPS. The nonprofit delivers her teen communications program to disadvantaged youth, and will form a college scholarship program.

“ETC HELPS will insure I can reach all teens no matter what their circumstances, and I am happy to talk to any teen organization that wants the program.”

The nonprofit is also launching a nationwide campaign with law enforcement to prevent teens from texting while driving.

Donations to help Kelman provide her training to needy teens can be made at www.etchelps.org.

To find out more about Enhancing Teen Communication or ETC HELPS, call (949) 633-5303.