Words Matter….
August 4, 2017

Yesterday, I heard that Michelle Carter was sentenced to 2 ½ years in prison for involuntary manslaughter.

She will probably serve about half of that time, 15 months because of the act of texting.

You may not have heard of the case. In 2014, Michelle was texting her boyfriend, Conrad Roy III, encouraging him to commit suicide. He expressed some hesitancy while he was attempting suicide (filling his truck with carbon monoxide). At one point, he got out of his truck and Michelle texted him to get back in and finish the job. And he did.

Some legal scholars worry about the precedent of making "speech" criminal and defend the fact that encouraging suicide is not illegal. You can read more about the conviction and the questions it raises here: http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/suicide-texting-case-sets-bad-precedent-experts-say/ar-AApodHm?li=BBmkt5R&ocid=spartandhp.

Regardless of what you think about her conviction, perhaps it is time for us to admit that words we use (whether verbally expressed or sent via text) matters.

We have lied to our children for years. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!" That statement is crazy – because words cut to the quick. Michelle's words even motivated Conrad to persist and take his life.

Words we use matter and therefore, perhaps it is the time that our culture accepts the reality that when we speak (or text, or email or write) we need to be mindful of the people we encounter and the people with whom we are engaging. We are responsible for the words we use in our conversation and our relationships.

I don't know if it is right or wrong for Michelle to go to jail. I do know it is right that we as a society stand up and take note and make the decision that we will be more conscientious with the use of our words.

Lives are depending on it!