



GUARD YOUR HEART. GUARD YOUR MIND. GUARD YOUR BODY.

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Back to School Edition

Exposures & Pressures Your Teen May Face

We as parents have a responsibility to understand potential issues and pressures so we can recognize warning signs and help our kids. So what are some of the extra things your child might be learning or dealing with at their school? Bullying & Cyber bullying - bullying used to be on the playground, but now there is also cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is when a child is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or targeted by another child using the Internet, mobile phone, or other type of digital technology. Check out www.stopcyberbullying.org for examples.

- Texting - 45% of teens say their cell phones are the key to their social life. 47% say it would destroy or hurt their social life if they could no longer text on their cell phone, 42% of teens say they can text blindfolded. Teens 13-17 are the biggest texters of all; they average 2,272 text messages a month, according to the Nielson Company. Is your child getting the rest they need, or up late texting? Having all cell phones left on the dining room table at bedtime might take the temptation away for late night texting and sleep deprivation.
- Sexting - many factors involved; need for attention, desire to be recognized, peer-pressure, flirtation, new teen dating rituals, proof of commitment in a relationship, raging hormones, following the example of noted teen celebrities, adolescent risk taking and immaturity can all be involved in a teen's decision to sext. Do your kids understand the dangers?
www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/01/15/national/main4723161.shtml
- Pornography - sexually explicit pictures, writing, or other material whose primary purpose is to cause sexual arousal. These resources are unlimited to our kids!
- Oral Sex - Kids think they can avoid pregnancy and diseases while still enjoying the pleasures of sexual activity and retain their virginity. Most kids don't realize they are at risk for the transmission of STD's by having oral sex.
www.oralcancerfoundation.org/facts/index.htm
- Depression/low self-esteem/suicide - Suicide is the third-leading cause of death of America's young people.
www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide-DataSheet-a.pdf
- Eating Disorders - feeling they don't look like what they see in the media. www.NationalEatingDisorders.org
- Drugs & Alcohol - partying to fit in and be part of a group. www.cdc.gov/HeathyYouth/alcoholdrug/

Something Parents Can Do!

Teens need social interaction and they like to "hang out", "chill" or "do nothing" with their friends. As long as they are with others who look like them, they enjoy being together. They move in groups, form alliances and love to belong. They hang out with the people they do because they feel comfortable with them.

Encourage your teen, as a rule, to hang around only with kids their age. Older kids aren't bad, but they have been exposed to more, and you might want to keep that exposure in check for as long as you can.

Begin early in the teen years talking to your teens about drugs, sex and alcohol, about respect and honesty. Discuss your own values and the reasons behind the rules in your home, but also back up your rules with strong consequences.

If your teen is already negatively influenced by his/her peers, have straightforward discussions with him/her; setting rules, and enforcing consequences. Don't waiver and don't enable your teen to continue in bad habits, they will only get more deeply involved in them if not dealt with **now**.

Remember, you as their parent are still the #1 influencer in your teens life! Even when they roll their eyes they are listening. Make sure they know the house rules and expectations; kids feel safer, more loved and secure when they know what is expected and have boundaries that their parents have in place and will enforce. Let kids use you for the reason they can't do something, "My parents would ground me for life if I did that."

Education is so important; but just as important is the relationship with family and feeling part of the family. If kids don't feel valued and loved, they will go outside of the family structure to find that connectedness. Try to take time out of your busy schedule to just talk, listen and spend time with your kids; it could make a real difference in their future!

Resources: Teens Texting Hurts Sleep, Maturity, Wednesday, May 27, 2009 www.INJURYBOARD.COM,
Texting May Be Taking a Toll, The New York Times, May 25, 2009; Sexting: A Parent's Guide to Keeping Your Kids Safe.
Illusions Uncovering the Truth About Pornography; Hazelden Publishing, Is your School Ready to Prevent Suicide?
Bad Company, Mark Gregston, May 5, 2009
www.4Parents.gov
Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, Free Press, 1968.