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Parenting Tip

March 23, 2009

More About Privilege and Responsibility

The idea of privilege and responsibility going together is very important for teens. It's amazing that parents sometimes move too quickly to give their children privileges that they can't sufficiently handle. Remember that the definition of "overindulgence" doesn't have to do with quantity. It has to do with giving children more than their character can handle.

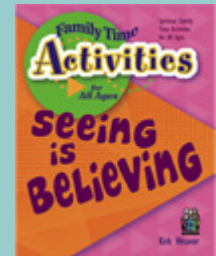
Privileges include:

- privacy
- staying home alone
- going to the mall alone
- email address
- Internet access
- cell phone
- beeper
- going to a friend's house
- having friends over
- having money

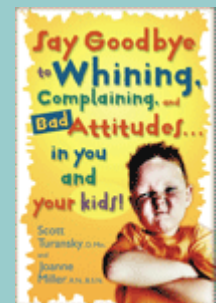
Responsibility is demonstrated by:

- honesty
- admitting mistakes instead of blaming or excusing
- reporting in, coming home on time
- anger control
- saying no to temptation when alone
- taking a stand for righteousness with friends
- completing a job without needing to be checked up on and reminded

Giving a child his own phone isn't wrong but a child who is not responsible may have just received easier access to friends who are a bad influence. Unmonitored Internet access can be dangerous for some since there is a lot of bad stuff out there. Chat rooms and email accounts require character or kids get into trouble. Allowing a teenage guy to go over to a girl's house when parents aren't home can be a problem.



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Teens may say, "You don't trust me." And the answer is, "Trust is something you earn by being responsible. It has to do with wisdom. Show me that you're responsible with checking in, doing your jobs around the house without being reminded, and taking a stand for righteousness when you're in a difficult situation; then we can talk about you having some of these privileges that you're requesting."

As parents, we don't just expect a young child knows how to clean up her bedroom; she has to be taught and then checked up on. The same is true with being responsible. We can't just assume that a child knows how to withstand negative peer pressure. Children need to learn responsibility and as parents we need to teach it.

It's similar to a young person learning how to swim. He or she is out there treading water and trying to learn to be a responsible, mature adult. Parents are on the boat tossing toys out to the child. Of course the kid loves the toys and then doesn't learn how to swim. Some parents give their children privileges before they're ready and in doing so, inadvertently contribute to their child's drowning.

This tip comes from the book, [Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes, In You and Your Kids](#) by Dr Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN.

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