Dear Parents,

My job of being a school administrator is nothing compared to the job of being a parent and specifically the parent of a teenager. As far as I can see, it's one of the most humbling experiences of life. I'm fortunate to be a part of this community with many excellent examples of parenting all around me. I am able to see the results of your hard work at home every day.

One of my biggest challenges in parenting teens is trying to draw the fine line between supporting and enabling my children. On the road to raising responsible adults, it is easy to lose our way. I've shared the list below with some of our sophomore parents, and it seemed to give them a shot in the arm. It is helpful for me to read and review this list quite often.
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Jess Hill
Director-Harpeth Hall Upper School

11 Things You Can Do To Build Irresponsibility in Your Child

1 Lie for her.

2 Make excuses for her behavior.

3 Correct or pay for her mistakes rather than allowing your child to experience the consequences of her poor choices. (She can learn from them and will learn to take responsibility for her own behavior.)

4 Model a lack of responsibility, yourself.

5 Refuse to believe she is capable of doing what she's been accused of.

6 Fight her battles for her.

7 Tolerate or excuse unacceptable behavior from her to avoid conflict.

8 Be sloppy about holding her accountable for her behavior. (especially if you are tired, frustrated, or starting to wonder if it is worth the bother.)

9 Routinely let her get away with things if she has a good enough excuse.

10 Do her chores and responsibilities because it is easier to do it yourself.

11 Give her privileges even if she hasn't followed through on what was required.

By Jane Bluestein

Should Parents Become Big Brother ?

When Carolyn Gordon, an administrative assistant from Tucson, Arizona, decided to install a program called "EBlaster" that let her secretly observe her 14-year-old daughter's instant messaging sessions, she didn't expect to learn anything alarming. She was surprised. " It was a rude awakening," said the 42-yr-old single mom." I found out she was drinking and smoking pot- which I never would have suspected." Gordon, who never told her daughter she had installed the monitoring software, says she was able to intervene early enough to curtail the problem and turn the eighth grader's behavior around. She also informed the parents of two of her daughter's online friends of their children's potential involvement so they could also address their child's problem before it escalated.

A parent in Illinois reports that internet monitoring software helped her stop some drinking parties and other illegal and potentially dangerous activities her teenage sons were planning with their friends.

Perhaps most disturbing, a Tennessee father who monitored his 13-year-old daughter's online chat activity discovered that the girl was having a sexual relationship with her 37-year-old middle school teacher. Using records of chat sessions, he was able to gather enough evidence to convict the teacher of statutory rape, according to news reports.
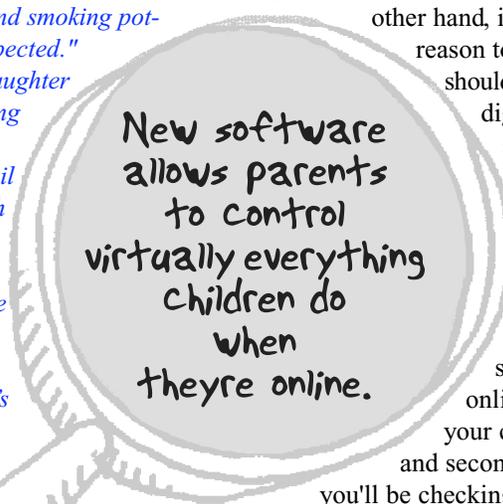
Parenting or Paranoia?

It's stories like these, of course, that fuel the sales of parental control software. But as the technology of parental oversight has improved, parents face tougher questions about when responsible supervision turns into paranoia or an invasion of children's privacy. Five years ago, most parental control software was used only to filter the Web, blocking children from pornographic or violent sites. Now, parents can have godlike powers over their children's online lives, viewing everything the kids do as they surf or chat, and immediately stopping any activity that the parents disapprove of.

New software allows parents to control virtually everything children do when they're online.

Naturally, every parent wants their child to be safe, whether the child is online or on the school bus. And certainly if you suspect your child is involved in drugs, inappropriate relationships, or other dangerous situations, it's your responsibility to step in and intervene using whatever tools are necessary. On the other hand, if you have no real reason to suspect any trouble, should you be reading their digital diaries? Child safety experts and psychologists all say " yes," but under two conditions: First, you should establish a set of ground rules and standards for going online that both you and your child can agree on, and second, let your kids know you'll be checking in on them. Dr. David Walsh, a psychologist and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family, explains: "Parents have a responsibility to monitor the whereabouts of their kids, whether it's in the real world or the cyberworld." At the same time, Walsh says that it's important to keep a balance between looking over your child's shoulder every second and putting your head in the sand. "Somewhere between the two extremes is the prudent parent," says Walsh. "For example, a parent shouldn't go off the deep end if their 15-year-old son visits a porn site," he explains. "But if he starts spending hours at porn sites and chat rooms, they need to know about it."

What about old-fashioned trust? Many parents, even those who know the perils that exist online, are confident that their kids will make good decisions and feel that monitoring their online activity would send a damaging message that they're not trusted to behave responsibly. "Given the right situation, any kid can make a poor set of choices," Walsh says. "If we think that our children are immune to temptation, we're kidding ourselves. If there's