

4 Ways to Give Your Teen Some Freedom Without Destroying Your Peace of Mind

Written by Ginny Grimsley

Wednesday, 11 September 2013 16:03

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Expert Offers Solutions for a Touchy Subject

Teenagers pose many dilemmas for parents, and one of the biggest is determining how much freedom to allow.

“There’s such a fine line – they have one foot in childhood and the other in adulthood, so you can’t completely trust their decision-making. And yet, you need to allow them some independence because in a very short time, they will be adults,” says George Karonis, a location-based services specialist.

“And, let’s be honest, life is better when your teen is happy. It’s nice to see them looking forward to something like a friend’s party or a weekend camping trip.”

Figuring out how to balance their need for a measure of freedom and independence against a parent’s concern for safety can be difficult.

“It is important for teens to be social, but as teenagers, they have a tendency to test their boundaries, which can lead to trouble. The good news is, there are ways to give your teen the freedom that he or she needs, and the peace of mind you require,” Karonis says.

He offers the following solutions for parents:

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- **LiveViewGPS, Inc.:** This new service temporarily turns any cell phone into a location device. It's an economical solution for families that occasionally need to be able to pinpoint someone's location but don't want to download software to their phone or spend a lot of money on hardware, says Karonis, who is the founder and CEO of the company. The service requires the permission of the son or daughter whose phone would be tracked, which adds an element of honesty and transparency. Users pay a minimum of \$19.95 for 30 locates and when they need to find the phone – and the person to whom it's attached – they simply log into the website, where tracking is instantaneous and displayed on a satellite-view map.
- **Reward Responsibility:** If your teen has already proven himself or herself to be reliable and punctual with multiple responsibilities – completing schoolwork in a timely manner; diligent with extracurricular activities like sports, band or theater; or has responded well to after-school employment – it's time to give him or her the benefit of the doubt when it comes to fun. Make it clear, you trusting them to use good judgment because they've earned that trust. But trust can also be lost.
- **Set the example of consistency:** Predictability is good when it comes to raising children, especially in terms of personifying virtues like honesty, punctuality and reliability. Teenagers are keenly aware of hypocrisy and are liable to use a parent's contradictions against them in rationalizing bad behavior. The "do as I say, not as I do" rule may be convenient, but teens see through it. Use a calendar, perhaps on your refrigerator or synch schedules on your family's smartphones, to encourage everyone to show up at expected times. If someone is going to be late, have a system in place for sending appropriate notification.
- **Don't be strangers:** Most parents assume they know who their child is, but teens are our most rapidly changing family members. They're eager to establish their own identities and try new experiences in their run-up to adulthood. Who are the most relevant people in their lives, and do you know his or her friends? The more a group of friends knows the teen friend's parents, the more responsibility those friends will feel in honoring the parent's rules.

About George Karonis

George Karonis has a background in security and surveillance, and has specialized in location services since 2005. A self-professed computer geek, one of his chief concerns is balancing

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the usefulness of tracking with the protection of individuals' privacy. He is founder and CEO of LiveViewGPS, Inc. (www.mobilephonelocate.com)