

When Should You Come Between Your Teen and Their Phone

Today 75% of children between 4 and 17 have cell phones. Are you, the parent, using technology access as a means of behavior control? Confiscating phones, limiting time, useage, and other such parenting strategies do not always work as intended. Limiting access to technology can adversely affect your relationship with your child sending the message that they are untrustworthy. One alternative is to talk about phone use and the rules associated with it.

If you, the parent, think they spend too much time on their phone what rules are in place and are compromises possible? For example, is your teen allowed useage of their phone during family meal time or during other family quality time? Are there compromises that can be made as to how much time they spend on their phone? Does your teen act with integrity, responsibility, and respect? Are you, the parent, providing a positive role model as to how to use technology or do you also spend an inordinate amount of time on your phone or ipad? How often is technology used to reward good behavior?

So what do you do about too much screen time? One idea is to put an app on your phone that would allow you to determine when and how your teen is using their phone without totally invading their privacy. If the screen time is abused in some way perhaps you can delete or limit access to social media and game sights. Or if it is extreme such as cleared search history (apps that hide images) or being completely blocked from access then by all means feel free to take their phone. Can you disable texting functions? Again, when abuse is apparent or taking it away is warranted. If taking the phone away you can offer an alternative such as only allowing use of the phone for homework. And finally, yes, take away the phone at night. The cell phones should be placed in an area of the home that is a common area and can be seen by all.