



Perspectives Vital
for Parents Today

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Your Child, The Internet
and Mobile Phones**
- **Sending Kids Abroad to
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- **Spanking: Can Good
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Survey Topic:

How has the Internet and mobile phones impacted your relationship with your child? Do you have lingering concerns but are not sure what to do about it, exactly? Tell your story in a narrative or essay format. Send your story to

jullien@surewest.net.

(Note: anonymity will be protected.)

I started Banana Moments for all the parents who are seeking ways to strengthen their role in their children's lives at a time when there are so many influences straining the parent/child relationship. Over the past ten years I have observed this strain many fold. From the cultural influences that introduce our children to sex, violence and foul language at earlier and earlier ages, to the Internet and mobile phones that tend to isolate children giving them increased access to unsafe relationships, and legislation that circumvents the parent (such as abortion laws that allow minors do get abortions without parental consent), the relationship between the parent and child has many counter influences. One and two generations ago, the primary "counter influences" were peers and rock groups. Legitimate authority was ascribed to parent and teacher roles. Today, authority is more earned than ascribed and we parents are faced with a leadership challenge which requires us to be well informed.

Banana Moments

Sharing Insights and Lessons Learned for Parenting in the 21st Century

A Teenagers' Guide: How to Get Mom off My back! She's Driving Me Nuts!

Problem:

She is always telling me what to do, when I already know!

Frustrated Response:

Snap at her; yell; show her how angry you are.

Result:

She will keep checking because your response raises doubt for her. You also hurt her feelings every time you yell and are disrespectful.

Effective Response:

Assure her you know what to do – and follow through with action. Take responsibility and your Mom will back off.

Example: Getting up in the morning

Tell your Mom the time for which you have set your alarm, and let her know what time she can expect to see you downstairs ready to leave for school in the morning. As long

as you follow through on what you say you are going to do, she will have no reason to keep checking.

Problem:

I don't like school. I'm doing what I feel is necessary. She's always talking about how I need to do more and it drives me nuts.

Frustrated Response:

Yell; threaten to quit school.

Result:

Makes Mom even more anxious and she will continue to make efforts to persuade you to change your behavior. Not because she wants to annoy you, but because your personal development and education is her highest priority.

Effective Response:

Establish good schoolwork habits and routine, and honestly stick to it. She will back off.

From the Editor: Why Banana Moments?

The title "Banana Moments" was inspired by a phone call my 22-year old son attending San Diego State made to me while I was surveying bananas at a local supermarket. He had called to let me know he just went skydiving. I had never heard him so elated and a part of me was happy for him. But then it hit me. My son was 500 miles away making life and death decisions. I could never look at bananas the same way again. As I stared at the bananas, trying to decide which ones to take, it was more evident than ever that parenting would always involve a series of curve balls. These curve balls, past and future, are "banana moments" to me now. Many are light hearted, some are gut wrenching, and most are challenging and rewarding. This newsletter is dedicated to sharing "banana moments" with insights and lessons learned as we face the parenting leadership challenge today.



*Gateway to the World;
Good and Bad*

The Internet and mobile phones make oblique the landscape our children are navigating today. Equipped with this technology, it is very easy for our kids to communicate and develop relationships with people we do not know and who are not safe. So how do we get a handle on how our children are utilizing Internet and mobile communications technology? Ex-

perts agree that because the Internet and wireless communications is here to stay and increasingly ubiquitous, the best way to deal with the potential threats and stresses is to embrace the technology and work closely with your child to help them understand the dangers and the best practices to stay safe. Below are six basic steps for strengthening your role as a parent when it comes to your child, the Internet and mobile Phones:

1. Establish a family Internet/Mobile phone policy. Assure your child that your aim is to help him or her make the best use of the technology, not to simply restrict it. Discuss the pitfalls as well as the benefits of the technology. Make a list (pros and cons). Have your child offer what they know about the problems as well as what the technology can do. If you have not already, you may want to implement a “no profiling” policy that says that parental approval is needed to complete any profile.

Another key element of the policy should address the mobile phone. If your child is planning to spend the night at a friend’s home, be sure to call the parent at their home phone and confirm. It is not a matter of trusting your child; it’s a matter of setting your child up for success. If you allow your child to call you on the mobile phone, without verification with responsible adults, your child may eventually find themselves in compromised circumstances with peers if adults are not involved in confirming their plans.

2. Supervise Profiling. Profiling is not new—providing information that direct mail houses, catalogue companies and your local supermarkets want to know about you as a consumer, has been going on for ages. The Internet profiling, however, is very serious matter. Some of the profiling on social websites has included questions about sexual preference and how you want to die. The information about your child (age, sex, and other interests and preferences) posted on websites or via IM or chat rooms offers cyber perverts all they need to know in order to successfully manipulate your child to do things you would never expect. If you have not already, it’s a good idea to have a family policy of “no profiling” without permission for anything (supermarket cards, school activities, purchases, and Internet communications etc).

3. Caution Against Public Humiliation/Exposure. Be sure your child understands that whatever he publishes (on a web page, blog, email or text message) cannot be retrieved once sent and can be widely distributed in perpetuity. For many people, the Internet is very seductive and anonymous; it can be easy to “cut loose” and “let it all hang out”. And so it’s important that your child is encouraged to type or post only the things that she would always want to represent her well into the future. For example, college admissions and employers are now able to “Google” candidates to see how they are portrayed on their websites where young people can be seen in very comprising photos.



*“US Attorney for the Eastern District of CA,
McGregor Scott, cautions parents not to allow teenagers to have the Internet, a webCAM and a closed door. According to him it’s a recipe for disaster...”*

4. Supervise Internet Access. The Internet is interactive and that means that your child does not necessarily have to solicit the questionable websites – they will likely be presented to her. The U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of CA, McGregor Scott, cautions parents to not allow teenagers to have the Internet, a web-CAM and a closed door. According to him it’s a recipe for disaster as many kids are seduced into doing things their parents cannot believe. Internet access should always be located in a community room.

Note that “Control H” function on the Internet browser will give you a history of where your child has been. This will allow you to inspect what you expect with regard to adherence to your family policy. There are also many software programs like Net-Nanny, CyberPatrol, and CyberCity that will allow you to set up parental controls. In the end, there is no substitute for supervision and getting your child to understand why they have to implement safe practices. (Continued: See Child, Internet, Phones page 4)

Sending Kids Abroad to Study? Mix Caution with Enthusiasm.

(From a Northern CA Mother of two boys) Part I

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My oldest son and I each had travel experiences to study abroad - he at fourteen years old and me when I was nineteen. In my son's case, we had good information about the program and the people running it. In my case twenty-eight years ago, before the age of mobile phones and Internet, I was flying blind into a situation that was very unsettling at best.

My son spent a month in Bolivia to attend a soccer-training program the summer he turned fourteen years old; and he returned one of the most grateful fourteen-year-olds I have ever met. During his stay, he lived with a 'middle class' family (mom, dad and a small boy about six years old) where the modest home was surrounded by a concrete wall with broken Coke bottles sticking out the top to keep the impoverished people in the neighborhood from trying to get in. In order to get from one room to the next, they had to exit the building and walk inside the next door (much like a series of classrooms on campus). When their soccer teams traveled to matches, they had to get behind the bus and push it past the very muddy spots in the roads that were not paved. The local children played soccer in the muddy roads barefoot with rolled up newspaper as their soccer balls. So when his father and I noticed that his soccer shoes were badly torn up with big gaping holes, we suggested that we purchase some new shoes and his reply was, "Oh no, these shoes are very comfortable." Prior to making that trip, like most teenagers, any excuse to buy the next model shoe would do. We had a number of conversations about how grateful we were to live in this country with all the comforts and conveniences we take for granted.

When I was nineteen, participated in a study abroad program by a private company who rented facilities at the Sorbonne University in Paris. I had assumed that since the French professor at



**Look for Part 2 in the next
Banana Moments issue:
"How to Inspect What You Inspect
when Sending Kids Abroad"**

my university had distributed the flyer, it would be perfectly suitable; so I didn't ask many questions. When I arrived at the campus housing assigned to my group, I was stunned to learn we were staying at an all male Tunisian dormitory and my group was comprised of younger teenagers and they were very flirty with the men, who were very excited about American girls living in their dorm for the summer. My first night, someone tried to get into my room. I had to hold the door knob and scream, "Go to hell!" in broken French. Eventually I befriended the dorm Concierge and his family (also Tunisian) who had me over to dinner a number of times and I had established respectability through their affiliation. And while in America, the younger teenage girls' conduct would not have been so controversial, in the Tunisian male dorm at the international campus in Paris it was very inappropriate and I didn't want to be mistaken for someone who was looking for attention that way.

That experience in Paris didn't spoil my enthusiasm for my own children to experience another culture in their early years. I have no regrets about the month I spent in Paris all those years ago; it was a lesson learned about inspecting what you expect before traveling abroad. I had met and befriended some very nice people at the Tunisian dorm. So when my oldest son was encouraged to travel abroad for soccer, it was a controversial topic because there were some in our circle of family and friends who didn't think it wise to send a person so young abroad without a family member chaperone. Fears about my son possibly being abducted or harmed were prevalent. My husband and I knew this particular program had been operating for over twenty years, and the soccer club president who had been sending players through this program for over fifteen years and knew the people who ran it had recommended it to us. We could get answers to all our questions about the standard of living, traveling, activities, food, health care, and supervised and unsupervised excursions. My husband and I felt it was worth every penny that our 14-year-old son's perspective had been broadened substantially.

The proposed legislation would make spanking a criminal offense. Which begs the question, can good parenting really be achieved through more legislation?

A couple of weeks ago, while standing in line at the supermarket, a young mother and her 3-year old son were having a disagreement which everyone could hear because her child was screaming like a siren non-stop. And the mother would calmly say, in a firm voice so others could hear her, "Now I told you we are not buying it this time." And she stood still, looking at her feet or the magazines, really trying to avoid the looks of

Continued: See "Spanking?" Page 4

Spanking – Can Good Parenting Be Legislated? By Sox Massena

The national debate about spanking was fired up recently when CA State Assemblywoman Sally Lieber proposed legislation to outlaw spanking kids less than four years old (AB755). It is argued that because children are so dependent and vulnerable, that they must be protected from parents and guardians who would cause them physical harm in the course of administering discipline; and it is further argued that spanking sets a bad precedent for violent behavior in the future. It's already a federal offense to leave marks when disciplining children, and most people will agree that a reliance on physical force to get small children to behave is not a good thing. However, it is imperative that we distinguish between discipline and corporal punishment. It seems that in all this discussion about whether to spank or not, what is not getting enough focus is how to effectively discipline our children – which is vital for their well being.

Also note that according to PeopleReachingOut (www.peoplereachingout.org) the Internet has enabled easy access to prescription drugs. If your child has access to a credit card, be sure to inspect what is being charged to the account and inquire about packages arriving to your home that you did not order.

5. Stay away from chat rooms. Chat rooms are where the perverts are waiting to introduce themselves to your child. Instant messaging is a little more protected. You can maintain a buddy list of some sort.

6. Know your children's passwords and periodically check to

see who is on their buddy list and the nature of the conversation.

Below are some resources with more information about providing parental guidance to our children using the Internet:

www.blogsafety.com

www.netsmartz.org/netteens.htm

www.projectsafefchildhood.gov

www.childsafenet.org



Bookshelf

Coach Your Teen to Success

by Barbara McRae, MCC

2004, Achievers Trade Press

Book offers helpful and insightful ways to strengthen your relationship with your teenager.

Spanking? Continued from Page 3

sympathy and judgment cast upon her as her child screamed bloody murder. Clearly, her strategy was to outlast the child, and the rest of us standing in line were made to endure his incessant screaming. Who knows? This might have been one of those instances where one swat on the behind would help her child to calm down and accept the fact that he's not going to get his way this time. On the other hand, if she does not give in to his demand, and his attempt to get his way by making a scene doesn't result in getting what he wants, then perhaps the next time he'll realize that it doesn't work and will not throw such a tantrum. Another parent in this situation might have left the cart of groceries and taken the child home with the clear explanation to the child that when you throw tantrums, we go home. The main thing is that the parent needs to be in control of their emotions when they exercise the discipline. Every young child is different. Some may respond better to a swat, others may learn after one failed tantrum, and yet others may need to be removed from the scene each time the tantrum occurs because spanking didn't work. Had this mother chosen to give her son a swat on the rear, and he had calmed down, I do not think that anyone would have lost respect for her or questioned her actions. What method to use should be up to the parent, not to the rest of us standing in line irritated with her son's screaming; or feeling sorry for the child.

Two generations ago, parental authority was simply not questioned by society or by our children. Today, a

greater percentage of the authority formerly inherent in a custodian role (such as parent or teacher) is more earned than assigned. Fourteen years ago when my youngest was three years old, I gave him a swat on the bottom because he was being defiant. He immediately turned around and hit me back, catching my hip, with his tiny little arm aiming for my bottom. "We don't hit Mom!" he declared. And while his reflex caught me off guard, there was clearly a standard for conduct and he was going to hold me to it. In my or my parents' generation, it would never occur to a child to hit back and scold a parent about hitting if a spanking were administered. Clearly this was a new era, and with my youngest son I would have to be smarter and choose discipline methods that did not involve spanking.

While legislation of spanking does not in my opinion offer any realistic and enforceable solution for kids that might be subject to battery, I think most people can agree that parents who rely upon spankings or other form of physical force on a regular basis may want to consider more strategy to get results. For example, if the child is accompanying the parent on errands right before naptime or a regular meal, they may be irritable and more likely to act out when things don't go their way. So timing outings when your small child is in the best shape to behave would be an integral part of establishing and maintaining good behavior on a regular basis, and minimize frustration levels which can sometimes lead to spankings.

Resources:

Center for Effective Discipline www.stophitting.com



Your Stories

Send your inquiries, stories and
Suggestions to Jullien@surewest.net.
Thank you!

Next Banana Moments Issue:
Summer (July-September)