

Empowered Teens and Parents

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MySpace Is Not The Problem by Debra Beck

A picture of your 14-year-old daughter in a provocative pose is highlighted on her my space account, and 40 plus year old men are looking at it. This is every parent's nightmare, and it should be.

MySpace seems to be the buzz with parents and their teens today. I can completely understand why a parent wouldn't want their teenager communicating with who knows who, and showing pictures of themselves to who knows who as well. I have talked to many parents regarding My Space and it keeps coming down to "MySpace is not the Problem".



It seems that parents think it's okay to sneak around and view their teenagers my space account, or look into journal, or even snoop through the teen's room. One parent actually said to me "if my teenager is doing crack I want to know about it" and my response to him was that "if you have to sneak around to find out if your teens on crack, there's a bigger problem".

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The bigger problem is your relationship with your teen. What do you want as a parent? You want a relationship with your teen that allows your teen to come to you with anything they need help with. You want to know that if they are having difficulties with an issue in life, that they will go to you.

Teens want to be allowed to be teenagers. Yes they need guidance, but they do not want to be controlled. If you try to control them, your problems will only get bigger. If you want your teen to come to you with issues, you can't tell them what to do. So, how do we give the guidance they need and want without showing them we have no faith in their ability to make decisions?

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First, let's teach them how to make good decisions for themselves. This means we have to be communicating with our teen. Communicating doesn't mean we tell them what to do. It means asking them what they think and no matter how hard it is for us to just listen. WE DO IT! As soon as you give your opinion, it becomes a judgment in your teen's eyes. Use the tools they are using, to do research to make a good decision, the internet. Show them how to make good decisions, and then let them know that you know they are capable of making a good decision, also letting your teen know you are always available know matter what.

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Can you see how hard it would be for your teen to come to you with problems if all you did was tell them how to fix it, it always feels like a judgment, and when we feel judged by someone we shut down to them.

We don't want our teens to shut down to us; we want them to come to us with everything. We want to be able to have the kind of relationship that allows us to go to them and ask them about what they think about MySpace and actually help them have a safe account.

We want to be able to explore touchy situations like drugs, alcohol, and sex and guide them into making good decisions. The more we treat our teen's like kid's without brains, the more distance we put between us and them, and the more likely they will not come to us with important issues they need help with, and we will find ourselves sneaking around their bedroom to find out who the are.