

Do You Snoop on Your Kids?

I've gone back in forth on my thoughts on snooping on kids.

I was a very well behaved teen compared to most and rarely got into trouble. My parents were very strict and snooped on a regular basis—including reading my journal. However, I didn't realize they were snooping until well into my college years when they were still snooping.

My thoughts were always that unless someone had broken your trust, there was no reason to "look for them to break your trust."

So, I was always set on having open communication with my kids and not having a need to snoop.

We were able to establish this quite early with the girls, but have had a harder time with open communication with my step-son. I'll say that we haven't exactly been able to establish a "unified front" with his family outside of our home when it comes to parenting. For the most part, he's an absolutely wonderful teen. However, under outside influences he slips occasionally. So, in addition to clear communication, we've found it necessary to check in on him from time to time.

For example, he has been allowed to purchase (not by my husband or me) shirts with pictures of scantily clad or silhouettes of naked women on them. My husband and I feel this is completely inappropriate.

When we've found those items, we've thrown them away. Since this has happened, we have discussed with him why we feel these shirts are inappropriate and haven't had any issues since.

We don't do full on snooping, but we do perform a quick scan. We have found a few more items we thought needed discussion and we openly discuss those with him.

Recently, he had expressed a want to get his ears pierced. We're pretty open parents and choose to pick our battles. So, we really didn't think this was a huge battle to pick. We told him we didn't think it was a good idea because it simply wouldn't look right on him at this point. We encouraged him to wait until he was 18 when he would hopefully have less of a baby face. He didn't really talk much more about it. So, we thought it was over.

However, we found a self-ear-piercing kit in his room. We were disappointed that someone would buy it for him and that he would feel like he needed to hide it from us. In addition, we knew how poorly it could turn out. We could just picture him and one of his buddies trying to pierce their ears—not getting them even, not being sterile enough... Sheesh.

We had a very good conversation about it. We expressed our concerns about the kit itself and with him hiding it and (again, not choosing this as a major battle to wage) told him that if he really felt like getting his ears pierced was something he needed to do, that we would take him somewhere and have them professionally and properly done.

I feel like he is seeing that things teens typically try to get away with will not sneak by us and he sees that we discuss with him why he felt the need to try to sneak it by us, why he felt he needed to do it in the first place and why we think it's inappropriate.

I can count on one hand the number of these sorts of discussions we've had to have in the last year, so we see great improvement in the trust, communication and his understanding of what's expected of him. I'm sure there will be more discussions as he is indeed a teen boy, but I'm confident he'll grow up to have a healthy understanding of life, himself and us. 😊

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