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Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.

Parental Monitoring Redefined¹

Kate Fogarty²

"It's 10 p.m...do you know where your children are?" This slogan illustrates parental monitoring, one parenting behavior that helps youth succeed. Research shows that parents who are aware of their children's activities and whereabouts have teens who are less likely to be negatively influenced by peers or to get involved with problem behaviors. To improve parental monitoring and ensure good child outcomes, experts suggest that parents come up with rules, actively track a teen's behavior, and have consequences in place when rules are broken.

But how do parents monitor their teen's activities? Teens may provide information voluntarily, while other parents may need to ask the teenager and his or her friends. Parents can actively control their teen's freedom by imposing curfews and rules about activities and friends.

A research study of parental monitoring of 14 year-olds found that teens who voluntarily communicate their activities to parents are least likely to be involved in problem behaviors such as substance use and delinquency. The researchers conclude that parental control or tracking of teen activities is not the answer for preventing adolescent problems; rather, quality parent-teen communication and strong emotional

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bonds make the difference. Teens may be more likely to avoid behaviors that parents disapprove of if they're worried about harming the good relationship and trust they share with their parents (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). This research suggests that the parent-child bond that is built and maintained over a lifetime can be more powerful than parents suddenly enforcing strict rules and constant monitoring when their child becomes an adolescent.

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http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/356.mp3

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References

Stattin, H., & Kerr, M. (2000). Parental monitoring: A reinterpretation. *Child Development*, 71, 1072-108