



DIGITAL BOUNDARIES AT HOME

Conejo Chinese Cultural Association

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WE'VE ALWAYS STRUGGLED WITH TECHNOLOGY AT HOME

- There is not a family that I know as a youth pastor that isn't arguing over this issue.
- Surprising as it sounds, it's not a new issue.
- 25 years ago, my dad told me to turn off my Nintendo Entertainment System! I had been playing "The Legend of Zelda" already for 3 hours straight. He thought it was a waste of time and that the music was annoying!
- So, I moved to my room and played "Might & Magic" on my Commodore 64 desktop computer. Then my parents complained I was late to many family activities because I was in my room playing computer games all the time.
- While this was happening, my sister was always on the phone (land-line) hogging up the line talking to her friends about cross-country and guys.

IS THE HOME THAT DIFFERENT TODAY?

- YES & NO.
- “No” in that we still struggle with the same technological/digital boundaries at home.
- “YES” in that, now this issue is a must to address! Technology has become hundreds of times more personalized, real to life, interactive, and compartmentalizing our lives from each other.
 - If a simple smartphone has the dynamic power to allow us adults to stay in our room for hours, how much more for our kids?
 - Every parent has experienced this. The difference is the parent that has prepared (less arguments) versus the parent that have not (more arguments).

HOW TO CREATE A TEENAGE DIGITAL MONSTER AT HOME

- Set no smartphone, tablet, and/or desktop boundaries.
- Wait until their junior or senior year in high school to implement some rules.
- Not following through enforcing the guidelines you may have set.
- Allowing them unlimited access to their electronic devices.
- Not communicating with them.
- Not conversing with them the importance of family time and real-life communication in general.
- Being an adult digital monster yourself.

DIGITAL PARENTING BASICS

Assumption: We want to prepare our kids with certain life skills that will help them not to just succeed in college and their future career, but be young men & women of good character and have good relational skills. Also, having more harmony at home would be nice too!

Problem: Leaving our kids to do what they want with their technological devices might help accomplish the first thing, but not all the other things.

-What are some digital parenting basics toward solving this?

- 1. Ideally, you will need to have house digital boundaries starting when they are babies.**
(This means you need to have a plan worked out with your spouse beforehand.)
 - Example: Traditional hand/eye coordination toys or your tablet? What will be the outcome? What is your desired outcome?
- 2. Model & emphasize real-life communication as more important than technological communication.** [Three Parts of Communication: Body Language (60%), Tone of Voice (30%), Verbal Content (10%).]
 - Example: Texting syntax & manners VS. real-life syntax & manners.

3. Don't give technology to them as an unconditional gift. Make them earn it. The more responsible they are, the more ready they are, the more you can let your boundaries go. Freedom requires a maturity to not abuse it.

- Example: If your 16 year old showed a pattern of irresponsibility, would you give him/her a BMW as his/her first car? Would you even give them a car?

4. Let them know early, it's your house (& usually your money), so your rules. This means whatever is in your house is public to you. Whatever is private is only given after a proven record of responsibility. This includes tech & the internet.

- Example: It is not a wise thing to give your middle school son/daughter a lock for his/her room along with his/her own desktop computer with internet access in his/her room.

5. Communicate with them as a partner in helping his/her maturity. This is key. This includes teaching and negotiating with them about boundaries from time to time. A lot can be resolved if there is an open line of communication and a good relationship.

- Example: Who would you listen to more? A demanding boss or a caring mentor? (Maybe your demanding boss, but what if I told you that you weren't getting paid for your work?)

6. There will always be some disagreeing and arguing. Welcome to America! But, here's the fact. There will be less arguing if you have reasonable boundaries in place first, more arguing if you put boundaries in place later.

AN EXAMPLE OF SOME OF THESE FROM AN ARTICLE THAT WENT VIRAL (JANELL HOFFMAN TO HER SON)

Dear Gregory

Merry Christmas! You are now the proud owner of an iPhone....You are a good & responsible 13 year old boy and you deserve this gift. But with the acceptance of this present comes rules and regulations. Please read through the following contract. I hope that you understand it is my job to raise you into a well rounded, healthy young man that can function in the world and coexist with technology, not be ruled by it. Failure to comply with the following list will result in termination of your iPhone ownership...

1. It is my phone. I bought it. I pay for it. I am loaning it to you...

2. I will always know the password.

3. If it rings, answer it. It is a phone. Say hello, use your manners. Do not ever ignore a phone call if the screen reads “Mom” or “Dad”. Not ever.

4. Hand the phone to one of your parents promptly at 7:30pm every school night & every weekend night at 9:00pm. It will be shut off for the night and turned on again at 7:30am. If you would not make a call to someone’s land line, wherein their parents may answer first, then do not call or text...respect other families like we would like to be respected.

5. It does not go to school with you. Have a conversation with the people you text in person. It’s a life skill. (Half days, field trips and after school activities will require special consideration.)

6. If it falls into the toilet, smashes on the ground, or vanishes into thin air, you are responsible for the replacement costs or repairs. Mow a lawn, babysit, stash some birthday money. It will happen, you should be prepared.

7. Do not use this technology to lie, fool, or deceive another human being. Do not involve yourself in conversations that are hurtful to others. Be a good friend first or stay the heck out of the crossfire.
8. Do not text, email, or say anything through this device you would not say in person.
9. Do not text, email, or say anything to someone that you would not say out loud with their parents in the room. Censor yourself.
10. No pornography. Search the web for information you would openly share with me. If you have a question about anything, ask a person – preferably me or your father.
11. Turn it off, silence it, put it away in public. Especially in a restaurant, at the movies, or while speaking with another human being. You are not a rude person; do not allow the iPhone to change that.

12. Do not send or receive pictures of your private parts or anyone else's private parts. Don't laugh. Someday you will be tempted to do this despite your high intelligence. It is risky and could ruin your teenage/college/adult life. It is always a bad idea. Cyberspace is vast and more powerful than you. And it is hard to make anything of this magnitude disappear – including a bad reputation.

13. Don't take a zillion pictures and videos. There is no need to document everything. Live your experiences. They will be stored in your memory for eternity.

14. Leave your phone home sometimes and feel safe and secure in that decision. It is not alive or an extension of you. Learn to live without it. Be bigger and more powerful than FOMO – fear of missing out.

15. Download music that is new or classic or different than the millions of your peers that listen to the same exact stuff. Your generation has access to music like never before in history. Take advantage of that gift. Expand your horizons.

16. Play a game with words or puzzles or brain teasers every now and then.

17. Keep your eyes up. See the world happening around you. Stare out a window. Listen to the birds. Take a walk. Talk to a stranger. Wonder without googling.

18. You will mess up. I will take away your phone. We will sit down and talk about it. We will start over again. You & I, we are always learning. I am on your team. We are in this together. It is my hope that you can agree to these terms.

Most of the lessons listed here do not just apply to the iPhone, but to life. You are growing up in a fast and ever changing world. It is exciting and enticing. Keep it simple every chance you get. Trust your powerful mind and giant heart above any machine. I love you. I hope you enjoy your awesome new iPhone. Merry Christmas!

xoxoxoxo

Mom

FROM STRICTER TO LOOSER METHOD

(Looser Depends on Age & Maturity)

This is Where You Want to Start From & Loosen Up as They Grow.
Remember, Communicate & Release with Age & Maturity.

-Everything digital (computers, smartphones, etc..) stays in the more public places of the house (living room, kitchen, etc.), even if it is “yours.” They are parent’s property which they are allowing the kids to borrow. Passwords will be given to parents and parents can checkup on your digital conversations. This also means no taking your laptop or smartphone into your room when you sleep. They will all be placed on the dinner table.

-Privatization of these are earned, not given. This includes your gigabyte and text allowance.

-Digital devices are either earned through continued responsibility or as a gift upon entering middle school or high school.

- **Unless the parent is talking to you digitally, you will put down your digital device and look at them and converse with them.**
- **Family gathering times (dinner time, weekend outings, etc.) will be digital free zones.**
- **If you want more smartphone privileges, either do more chores at home, get better grades, or find a job; so you can help pay for it yourself.**
- **Have all of these things above (and others that you may think about) in writing and signed by the kids. Then post them at places around the house.**
- **Hope: Look forward to college! You' ll be free from all these guidelines! And you will be more mature too!**

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

