



It's a fine line between respecting your teen's privacy and doing your job as a parent.

How far should you go? As far as you have to. Because teenagers today have a minefield of risky behaviors to navigate—

drugs, drinking, tobacco, sex

—with powerful influences like peer pressure and mixed messages from pop culture, and new technologies such as the internet.

Fortunately, there's one influence in your teenager's life that trumps them all. You. So take action.

Let them know just where you stand on risk-taking and its consequences. And spell things out, because it's the contract both you and your teen will be living by. Set clear rules with your teen for safety and guidance. That's right, getting them to agree to the rules and understand the consequences gives them more responsibility and every teen wants that.

And yes, do keep close tabs on your teens. Know where they are and who they're with. Cell phones make it easier than ever to just "check in." It's not saying you don't trust your teen, it's saying you care. Get on the internet, too. Familiarize yourself with the kind of content they might be exposed to.

Above all else, one of the most powerful things you can do for your teenager is to set a good example when it comes to drug, tobacco and alcohol use. Respect them, be honest with them, be clear with them and they'll do the same. Everyone wins.

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