

A QUESTION OF PRIVACY

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I saw an article by Bonna De La Cruz in the local paper, titled 'Bigger homes stifle family time', so I was immediately interested. The point being made was that more and more kids now have their own bedrooms or 'mini apartments'. These rooms often contain TVs, DVDs, computers, phones, en suites etc. All of these 'bells and whistles' have created a complete entertainment center where kids no longer feel they need to mix with other family members, but can entertain themselves and carry on friendships by 'remote'. Gone is the need to share, communicate, or learn to get along with brothers and sisters. Bonding is in jeopardy and relationships are in danger of becoming superficial, reports De La Cruz.

When the issue of privacy was mentioned in the article, I knew I had to add my thoughts. Should kids have privacy in the home, and if so, how much? As kids reach their teen years they begin to become independent, to have their own space, and to a certain extent, privacy. But what are we really meaning by the term, 'privacy'? Here are some examples. Bathroom, dressing and grooming privacy is a given. From the time a child is two or three years old they need to start learning about modesty. It is important to teach them to dress in the privacy of a bedroom or bathroom, to keep a towel around them when they have no clothes on and to keep their briefs on. Every child (especially as they reach pre-teen years) needs to feel there is a place they can go to ensure some personal privacy.

What we need to teach them are the kinds of things they should and should not keep from others. They need to know that their bodies are precious and need to be protected. This means that they should not allow anyone to touch particular parts of their bodies. When an adult tells a child that 'this is our secret', and attempts to abuse them, a child needs to be aware that the situation needs to be exposed immediately, whatever the adult threatens as a consequence.

Our kids make mistakes in judgment sometimes and it is important for their recovery that parents know how to handle the situation. One of our kids did something once that was totally out of character. Our child took the consequence of their action, but asked us never to tell anyone what they had done. We honored that request. It is never the right move to continually remind a child of their failure. They need a safe place to crash, but also to heal.

Teens should be able to have friendships with the opposite sex without the whole family knowing all the details. Girls should be able to express their innermost feelings and thoughts in a diary without it being the right of siblings to

pry into it. However, parents need to monitor the behavior and moods of their children so they can detect negativism and a lack of respect for authority.

Kids can treat their rooms as their own space, but they should not be able to prevent their parents from entering. Parents have a right to explore every nook and cranny of their kids' rooms and should be aware of all of their kids' activities. For safety and moral reasons teens should not be permitted to take their boy/girlfriends into their rooms and close the door. This is asking for trouble.

Home is where a group of people learn to live together, share stuff, settle quarrels, and have their ideas respected. Home is a place where they can safely make mistakes, learn to accept one another's differences, encourage each other, and bear one another's burdens. A healthy home discourages isolation and, while respecting privacy, encourages a true sense of identity and belonging by treasuring just being together. God bless our families.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.