

SHOULD KIDS' BEDROOMS BE PRIVATE?

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I have heard arguments for and against parents 'invading their kids' space'. Yes, I agree that children should have a place that they call their own. A child's bedroom is their sanctuary. It is their own special place to play, read, rest and sleep without being disturbed. They can set up tea parties for their dolls, make castles with sheets or cardboard boxes and not have to pull them down because they are in the way of family traffic. Their bedroom is a place where they keep all the stuff that is dear to them, where girls write their diaries and boys plan their next escapades. It is a place where they can play with their friends or just daydream.

When I was a kid, I valued my own space probably more than most. My Dad remarried and within about five years there were three little children added to the family. There were only three bedrooms in our small house and before they came along my brother had one very small bedroom, I had one and my parents the other. Where do you fit three little kids? My brother moved out of the home at about the time my second sister needed a room and I had to share my bedroom with a 3-4 year old. I didn't get the room to myself very often, but when I did it was great to be able to escape the busy, noisy environment and have my own stuff around me.

I have heard many parents say the kids' bedrooms are their own domain and if they can live in what resembles an 'explosion in a mattress factory' then so be it! I disagree. I think that children need to be taught that respect includes keeping their rooms tidy. They need to learn to care for their own stuff and know that everything has a place ... other than the floor, the bed or the doorknob. As they grow up they then learn to care for their own stuff wherever they are, whether that be at school, at home or visiting their friends' homes. Part of teaching children to be tidy involves parents inspecting their bedrooms every week.

For their own safety, you need to know what is going on in every room in your home. For that reason your children need to understand that you will inspect their rooms whenever you choose. Too many times we have seen on the news that kids have been experimenting with explosives, drugs or been looking at pornography on the TVs or computers in their bedrooms. I can't think of one time that parents, upon being questioned by the media, have had any idea their kids were into illegal, unsafe or unsavory practices in their own home.

As parents we have the responsibility, to the best of our ability, to keep our children, our home and our immediate neighborhood safe. In order to achieve this, we must be aware of everything that is going on under our own roof and particularly in the 'privacy' of our kids' bedrooms. We should observe our

children's behavior and monitor their friendships. The boy responsible for the Sandy Hook school shootings concocted the idea in his bedroom after watching violent movies. His mother was not sufficiently aware of his unstable mental condition.

Bedrooms need to be a fun, safe and peaceful place to be. We need to teach our kids not only to keep them tidy, but also to be prepared for the fact that we will come in and check them at frequent intervals.

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.