

Parenting Tips
Trempealeau County Promoting Safe and Stable Families
By
Cyndy Jacoby, UWEX Family Living Agent

Keeping Tabs on Your Children

Do you know where your kids are, whom they are with, what kinds of activities they have planned, and how they are getting there and back again? It is important for parents to understand that monitoring is an ongoing parental right and responsibility.

This doesn't mean that parents must turn to becoming private eyes or members of a parent gestapo. Effective monitoring respects the increasing independence of the growing child. It allows parents to clarify their expectations and provides possible actions to enact when things may not go as was expected or planned. Monitoring also sends a message that when privileges increase there is also an increase in responsibilities. Also, it is simply polite to keep those close to you informed about your whereabouts.

As children gain more independence in moving through their world, it is important to engage adults outside of the family to help monitor your child's well-being. Neighbors, extended family members, and parents of your children's friends need to reinforce healthy boundaries.

We've all hear the familiar cries: "but all the kids are doing it" and "don't you trust me?" While children (especially pre-teens and teens) complain that parents are being unreasonable, they also gain a sense of security in knowing parents and others care about them. Parents are wise to talk to neighbors about what you expect of your children and their friends and ask for help in supporting these expectations. Organize or become involved in parent groups that allow you to support and agree on limits for all your children.

A 1994 Wisconsin study by Dr. Stephen Small and Tom Luster, found that youngsters who believed their behavior, *if observed*, would likely be reported to their parents were less likely to use alcohol or drugs, engage in sexual activity, and commit other deviant actions. The Search Institute study also found "neighbor monitoring" to be an important asset. However, this asset is not typically widely available. To find out more information about monitoring your children, go to this Search Institute site: www.search-institute.org/archives.gtb.htm

If you would like more information on parent education opportunities, contact Cyndy Jacoby, Trempealeau County UW-Extension Family Living Program, PO BOX 67, Whitehall, WI 54773. Phone: 715 - 538-2311, Ext. 209 or toll free 1-877-538-2311, Ext. 209. Email: cindy.jacoby@ces.uwex.edu



Family Living Program

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