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Safety yes – Snooping no!

Once again the Americans seem to be leading the way in addressing the perils of our so called feral teenagers! As we wrestle with the tyranny of technology, caused by social networking sites, and the general perils of life online, our cousins across the pond are now well versed in the new weapon in the parenting armoury – ‘teen tracking’. In the world of specialised, electronic surveillance of young people, nothing illustrates this better than a device called the SnoopStick.

The SnoopStick & More...

The SnoopStick looks like a memory stick. You plug it into your teenager’s computer when they are not around and it installs stealth software on to the machine. Then you plug it into your own computer and sit back at your leisure and observe, in real time, exactly what your child is doing online - what websites they are visiting, the full conversations they are having and who they are sending emails to. The child has no idea their computer is being monitored and you, the parent, need not worry about missing any salacious, incriminating detail, because the software records everything, so you can download and view what your child was doing earlier on. It gives you the power remotely to cut off Internet access, log off all users, or shut down the computer.

And surveillance of young people does not end there. Worried about what your teenager is getting up to in the car? There are lots of creepy solutions. Drive Cam, for instance, is an American system in which a small video recorder is mounted behind the rear-view mirror to capture sights and sounds inside and outside the vehicle. You can also get clothes with tracking devices fitted into them. Or for \$79 you can buy a semen detection kit, to test your teenage daughter’s clothing. \$99 will buy you a drug identification kit, which can detect up to 12 different illegal drugs.

Is snooping on our teenagers really the solution?

For some the SnoopStick symbolises our modern obsession with control. Others feel that it is the only way to prevent their children sliding into moral decadence. Is this really a solution? My concerns include how it is we find ourselves at this juncture!

Teen tracking begs the question: What has gone wrong in the first place?

These stopgap measures do not really fix the problem, solutions are never found until we ask the right questions. The tyranny of technology is fuelled by the tyranny of intimacy, namely the lack of time and communication parents have given their children. And that is not just an American problem.