

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

for the adventure of family life



35_ Can't do without a cell phone

It looks like Sabine couldn't live without her cell phone any more. The fifteen-year-old is online practically all day and if you ask her to put down her cell phone, there is a row. What to do as a parent?

First of all, it is important to understand what cell phones mean for young people (and not only for young people, but also for many adults): It satisfies the longing for contact and relationship. It fulfills the desire to be accepted and recognised by others, even if it means being constantly on the Internet. That's important to know, we all have to learn how to use the new media in a healthy way.

Check your own behaviour

Parents should be aware of how they use their cell phones: Do I check at every beep to see who has sent me a WhatsApp message or posted something on Facebook? How present is the cell phone when I eat with the children, when I am busy with them? Or am I always on call? Do the information, emails, messages from outside have priority over what is happening in the family right now? How is media consumption in general in our family? Is the television or radio on during meals? Do I always need distractions? Is my cell phone left online next to my bed at night, or do we put it in the kitchen in the evening? Are there times when the WiFi is turned off?

It makes sense to introduce times in the family where it is allowed to be online and everyone can use digital media. Only when parents set an example of how to use the new media appropriately are they credible for the children. If children are shown this from an early age, then it is easier to reach agreements with them on this subject.

The pizza meal

If your child already has excessive mobile phone consumption, it makes sense to treat them to a pizza. Tell him or her that you want to talk to them about their cell phone use. Find out why cell phones are so important for your child and what they actually do with them. Listen to what your child says. Develop an understanding of his or her actions. Then say, please without reproach, that you don't like the current situation. Talk about what you think, what worries you, and what you want from your child. Talk to your teen as if you were having this conversation with an adult friend that you want to be friends with after the conversation. Therefore: no accusations, no threats, no criticism. But be clear about how you see the situation.

Enter into negotiation: Where can we meet? Where am I ready to meet you and where are you ready to meet me? Ask your child what he or she thinks about it and listen to suggestions. If he or she doesn't have any suggestions, then say: "Okay, then think about it. I'll ask you again in three days." And in three days you'll ask again.

Bans are tempting, but not always effective.

As a parent, it is always tempting to threaten or enforce bans. You can do that, too. But the question arises, for what purpose? Do you want your child to learn to take responsibility for its life step by step, or do you want an obedient child or a child who circumvents the bans behind your back? If you want the former, then you must on the one hand take a clear position and stand by your thoughts and feelings, and on the other hand you must be interested in your child and treat him or her with respect. Negotiations are part of it.

When children and young people learn that people are interested in their point of view without immediately judging them, when they experience that mother and father have an opinion and also express it without insulting the child, if dialogues and negotiations are conducted respectfully, this strengthens the relationship. As a parent, you don't always get what you want, but children learn a lot from it: How do I deal with situations where we have different opinions without putting the other person down?

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