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Pros & Cons of Children Having Mobile Phones

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Cell phones are a must-have accessory among children, tweens and teens. As of 2010, as many as 75 percent of 12 to 17 year olds had their own cell phones, according to The Pew Charitable Trusts. There are many advantages, as well as drawbacks, to allowing your child to have a cell phone. As a parent, you know your child best, so after weighing all the factors only you can decide what age is right for your child to have a cell phone.

Safety Benefits

In the event of an emergency, having a cell phone allows your child to contact the police, fire department or ambulance service immediately. You can also contact your child if there is a family emergency. With terrorist threats and school shootings turning into a sad reality, a cell phone can serve as a lifeline between you and your child. Many phones are now equipped with GPS and safety apps, which will allow you to track your child's phone and, hence, your child if needed.

Teaching Responsibility

Having to look after a cell phone and using it with care will teach your child about the importance of responsibility. Set guidelines on cell phone usage. Your child will have to learn how to use his cell phone within the limits imposed by you.

Convenience Factors

Cell phones allow the convenience of your child being able to contact you easily without having to look for a pay phone and quarters. They also allow you to contact your child with ease. For example, if your child is late coming home from school, instead of sitting and worrying you can easily contact her. Your child can also inform you if there has been a change of plan--for example, if the school bus is running late or if he is going to a friend's house and will be home late. Your child can also utilize her smart phone for helping with school work, by looking up information about school work online.

Disruption in School

Children often use their cell phones during class time to send or receive text messages or to play games, causing both distraction and disruption. Cell phones can be used as an aid for cheating on test and exams, by students sending one another test answers via text message. Cameras on cell phones can be used to take inappropriate pictures of other students discreetly, which can then be distributed or shared online.

Cost Considerations

Although many cell phone service providers are offering cost-effective plans for families, you still have to be careful as there are many charges that you may be unaware of. These include being charged if your child uses more minutes than those in the plan, sending text messages or picture messages, downloading apps, buying ring tones and using the Internet. .

Hidden Dangers

Many cell phones offer Internet access, giving your child an opportunity to visit websites and use social media that you may not normally allow your child to access. This gives her the independence and opportunity to communicate with people from all walks of life, including sexual predators. Your child may be more prone to bullying. Bullies are using text messages and social media as a method of victimization, and malicious gossip is also often spread via social media, as well.