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**CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE NEED FOR
MONITORING CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES ON THE INTERNET**

As a licensed clinical psychologist, working with families for over 25 years, I can state absolutely that children need limits. For healthy development, they need to know that their parents are there, that they are involved and aware of their children's lives, interests and activities. Permissive or passive parenting has been shown again and again in clinical studies to be highly ineffective. With no limits, children will push in negative directions harder and harder, getting into more and more trouble, all in an attempt to get their parents to parent. Unconsciously, they are trying desperately to get their parents to finally say, "No!" where the child is unable to do this alone. With permissive parents who set no boundaries, when they finally try to say "No", it is often too late.

Children will naturally rebel against parental boundaries. That is their job. They constantly test the limits. But there must be limits to test and rules against which to rebel. They will complain to their friends about how mean and strict their parents are. Kids very often do not have the emotional strength or courage to go against their friends on their own and it is much easier for them to simply say, "My lousy, rotten parent won't let me". The presence in their lives of a caring, involved parent provides them a safe environment from which they can begin to explore the craziness of the outside world. Including the INTERNET!!

Most parents are delighted when Little Johnny stops tormenting his sister and retreats to his room to use his computer. They heave a sigh of relief thinking that he is safe at home, doing something seemingly harmless and maybe even educational. The truth is that during this time the child can be getting into real trouble, being exposed to violence, pornography, or contacting dangerous, predatory individuals, all in the safety of his own room. To be a responsible parent, it is imperative that the parent knows where their child is going on the Internet.

I have reviewed the product, ComputerCOP, and I find it to be an easy to use tool capable of providing parents with a road map of their child's explorations on the World Wide Web.

DO PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT to review the web sites visited by their children or know the contacts they make? Not only do they have the right, they have the responsibility. Just as one would not leave their 10 year-old alone in Times Square in NYC at 3:00 am., saying "See you later, take care, bye bye, be home for dinner" it is irresponsible parenting to leave a child unsupervised wandering around the World Wide Web.

SECRECY vs PRIVACY Every child has the need for privacy and as a child grows, his need for privacy increases. But when kids begin to keep secrets (and this is obvious by the amount of anger they show when you touch on those areas) they are hiding something. They are afraid of being found out, of being exposed. They usually fear either embarrassment or punishment. ComputerCOP allows parents, in a non-intrusive manner, to monitor their child's activities. This is not the same as reading a child's journal or diary which is usually nothing more than disrespectful intrusiveness. Diaries do not provide a 12 year-old with information on how to obtain illegal firearms, build bombs or make dates with recently released sex offenders. The Internet does.

ISN'T THE INFLUENCE OF THE PEER GROUP VERY POWERFUL? Yes, especially with teenagers, friends do try to exert influence over their peers. Clinical studies, however, show that parents have a far greater influence over the values, attitudes and behaviors of their children. This is especially true if the children perceive the parents as being caring, interested and INVOLVED in their lives. Parents have more influence over their child than they imagine.

BUT PARENTS ARE NEVER HOME WHEN THEIR CHILD IS ON THE COMPUTER Most children today spend those important after-school hours from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. either with child care workers, or alone. And let's be honest, many child care workers are very happy when the kid in their charge is quietly punching away at a keyboard. Research shows conclusively that when people, including children, are being observed, their behavior changes. They will "do the right thing". Even if someone just THINKS they are being observed, they will "do the right thing". We have all seen how traffic slows down when a police car is spotted on the side of the road. Even if the police car is empty... people begin to obey the speed limit. One of the powerful effects of ComputerCOP is that the child knows that he is being watched, being taken care of, being protected. Even if the parents never actually use the product (but I highly recommend that they do), the child's behavior will be altered in the direction of the desired behavior because he THINKS that he is being watched.

WHAT IF THE PARENT FINDS SOMETHING? ComputerCOP provides the user with valuable resources to answer the parents' questions, provide information, and make referrals to appropriate professional personnel, if necessary.

But let's be optimistic here! Parents will find something. Maybe even something good! They have the opportunity to discover a wealth of information about their child's interests... which will not be all negative and dangerous! With the road map provided by ComputerCOP, the child's developing personality, which is often occluded by loud music and purple hair, has the opportunity to come shining through. More avenues of communication and opportunities for sharing will become evident. And anything that enhances communication between parent and child is a true blessing.

Dr. Carol Friedland is a licensed clinical psychologist She is in private practice in New York City where she works with individuals, couples and families. Dr Friedland is a regularly featured expert in a wide variety of print and broadcast media.