The Benefits of Giving Your Child a Cell Phone

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The question of whether to buy your child a cell phone is a daunting modern dilemma for many parents. What are the benefits and drawbacks of giving a cellphone to children? Are there any risks?

Even more, deciding if your child is mature enough to care for a phone, if they will use it responsibly, and if it will actually help them more than distract them is far from a clear cut set of concerns for parents. According to recent research, however, parents are beginning to appreciate the benefits of giving their children cell phones more and more.

The Guardian found that 1 in 10 five year olds in Britain had a cell phone, although the average age for children to receive their first phones was a young 11 years old. What are the benefits to giving your child a cell phone?

Safety and Security

Cell phones are one of the easiest ways to keep track of your kids. With a quick call you can find out where they are, who they are with, and when they will be home. At the same time, they can give the same feeling of safety to your children when allowing them to know their parents are only a quick phone call away for any emergencies or problems.

For parents that have particular concerns about the safety of their children, most phones can also have gps tracking systems installed so that the exact or approximate location of the phone can be pinpointed at any given time online. Similarly, given an emergency in the home or with a family member, cell phones can be linked to home security systems so that the child will be notified of a problem with the family or home at the same time as the parent.

Companies like Safe Sound Family help link security systems to mobile phones for various types of emergencies. With children becoming more independent at younger ages, cell phones can help you stay connected with your child.

Convenience
Beyond the safety benefits of giving your child a cell phone, the convenience of having contact with your child at a moment's notice is priceless. A million potential daily changes may make you want to talk to your child improvisationally—maybe you are running late for dinner, would like them to pick up some pizza, or simply want to let them know you care for them. Giving them a cell phone will allow you to let your child know of last minute thoughts without any problem.

Social Inclusion

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 85% of children aged 14-17 already have cell phones. Even 69% of 11-14 year olds have cell phones. Many of these children keep in contact with their peers through messaging, texting, and calling in a way that facilitates their inclusion in social interactions.

Without their cell phones, they would have a much more difficult time cementing new friendships and finding out about popular social events like birthdays and parties. Although other forms of contact are obviously possible, the popularity of cell phones have made it so that children that do not use some sort of cell phone to keep in contact with their friends are at a slight social disadvantage.

Potential Drawbacks

The benefits of giving your child a cell phone do have some accompanying risks. Some children may not be mature enough to take care of the phone, making it a waste of money when lost or stolen. Other children may abuse the privileges of the phone, spending too much money on calls and texts or too much time writing or playing on the phone. To avoid such downfalls, signs of such negative behavior should be monitored and quickly responded to.

As cell phone usage has skyrocketed throughout the world, it comes as no surprise that we see more and more children taking part in the trend. Unlike some forms of technology, however, giving your child a cell phone has a myriad of benefits that often outweigh any of its potential drawbacks. For more information, see WebMD’s article entitled: "Is Your Child Ready for a Cell Phone?" [3]

Read more on children and technology. [4]