Cyber Rites of Passage
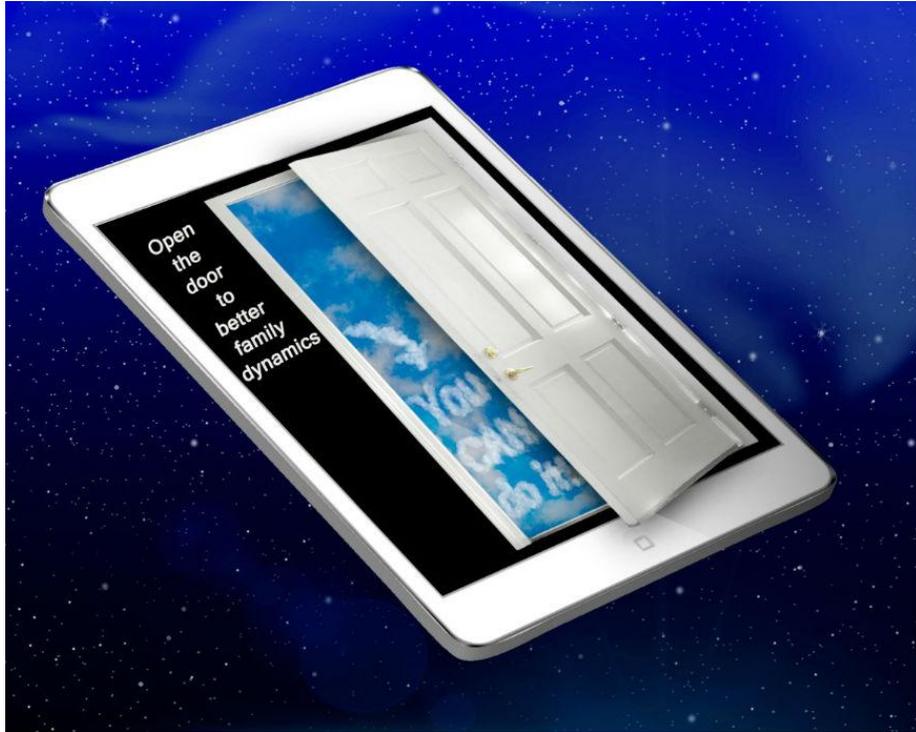
Open the door to better family dynamics

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A Parent's Guide to Setting Age-Appropriate Limits for the use of Mobile Devices and Apps

by Joanna Jullien
A Banana Moments Foundation Publication

Cyber Rites of Passage

How to set age-appropriate boundaries for children using 'smart' devices

By Joanna Jullien

Cover Graphic by: Christi Benz

From the author

As an ancient cyber mom of two grown sons, I began my journey to understand what it means to grow up in a cyber powered world and the new demands on parents circa 2004 when my youngest hit middle school. That was when the mobile phone landed in the hands of youth and texting fast became their main artery of communication. Many parents equipped their children with mobile phones believing that it would keep them safe; always connected to mom or dad. How little was truly understood about this mobile technology that would eventually grant kids access to the world – all of it, raw, full of intense emotion and aimed at them like a fire hose. Worse yet, we had not any previous parenting experience with such devices and our children were not socialized for cyber communications. We and our children were largely unprepared to resist the network pressure to conform and surrender personal power to the agendas of manipulators including bullies, perverts and commercial interests.

Having been trained in behavioral science at U.C. Berkeley, and coming from a career in working with technology to support relationships in the commercial arena, it was clear to me that this was a power crisis that would require a transformation of our parenting culture beyond styles and methods dealing with discipline and consequences. There was a beckoning to the depth of my soul that this power crisis was a call to action to develop authentic bonds with children beyond what previous generations of parents dealing with innovation were called to do. So I abandoned my career in the corporate world promoting technology applications, and created a publication called Banana Moments (a name I give all of the surprises of parenting precious souls with free will), and developed a training program to govern the cyber-powered home with certain authority called *Fresh Start*. In January 2014, Banana Moments became a non-profit corporation, *Banana Moments Foundation* to inform, inspire, prepare and advise parents as household executives who are raising emerging executives to be self-governing in the network and in the flesh. The premise of the training is rooted in the mustard seed of faith that makes a free society possible in the first place: that God is sovereign over the life of an individual and grants us intelligent life and free will. That is power that cannot be taken, but it can easily be surrendered by the individual. It is this fundamental truth that keeps us cyber-secure and free.

So the strategic and blessed objective of the modern parent is to embrace parenthood as a divine appointment, to train children to appreciate that this mustard seed of faith that makes liberty possible is the root of their personal power and so the question about governing the safe use of cyber tools is less about parental control and more about "how much power the child is going to give up to the social network?" If we approach youth, who can easily believe they can simply "google" whatever they need to know such that parental wisdom can seem obsolete, with the understanding that they already have power in the form of free will (that means you decide what to believe and who to follow), the conversations about boundary setting transform into learning how to be in control of your world and stay free.

Hence, these *Cyber Rites of Passage* were developed to establish boundary setting as an expression of God's love that promotes personal liberty. When we can give our children a path for developing responsible use and independence in their cyber social realms, the power struggle to be in control subsides. Rather these rites of passage enable parents to appeal to the innate desire in children to use their God-given ability to think for themselves and develop their own relationship with the Lord so they can learn how to be free from undue influence and reap the benefits of this technology. And by the same token, the parent-child bond is strengthened and deepened around the truth about power that makes a liberating and enriched family life possible.

To learn about more books from this author, visit: Joanna's Amazon page

Or visit: Banana Moments Foundation

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Introduction

Rites of passage typically provide some definitive criteria for conferring roles, responsibilities, rights and privileges and social standing to individuals as they mature in society. It is a way of raising children into adulthood with tangible, meaningful markers openly recognized by the community. Some traditions as examples include baptism, marriage, coming of age (Bat and Bar Mitzvah).

Most importantly, rites of passage give parents a way of helping children to appreciate delayed gratification does not mean "never", rather it means "not now." Staging access to internet-powered applications and functionality based upon the premise that children have the ability to learn how to be self-governing through their God-given ability to think for themselves enables children to be engaged in society, or the network, in age appropriate ways. It is a path of preparation and milestones that give kids something to anticipate with the peace of knowing there is a right time for all things *for which they are being prepared*.

For many families, mobile devices with internet connectivity have been in the hands of children without a clear path for graduated use of functionality. Hence there is confusion between trust and faith, secret and private.

A friend was telling me about how a young child sat down to read a book with his mom, I mean an old fashioned paper book, and when it came time to turn the page, the child swiped the page as if working the touch screen on an iPad or Kindle. You can imagine how perplexing it must have been for the small child.

Was the book broken?

How many of us still receive the old fashioned newspaper? Admittedly, we do. My husband and I share a home with my mother. And while all three of us use the internet, we still prefer to sit at the table with the printed newspaper. I do also rely upon social media and news feeds on various topics for my journalism.

Not surprisingly, my digital native, now a young adult, primarily gets his news by moving his finger along his smart device to scroll for headlines in his Google news feed. And recently, I attended a memorial service for my dad's childhood friend and there were perhaps four generations represented. One of his nieces was a teenager who was featured in the program to read a poem to honor him. She walked up to the podium, poised, nodded to the audience and then whipped out her smart phone. After a couple of swipes she read the poem to the audience from the screen. It was a mini-teleprompter. The older generations read from paper, of course.

No doubt this cyber connectivity is a very dynamic, selective process at our finger tips. It is becoming the dominant mode of communication and digital natives have access to wireless devices at very early ages. Some examples include:

- *Smart phones and tablets - handed over by mom or dad to young ones with an age-appropriate game*
- *Free social media and texting apps work on any internet-enabled device and do not require a phone number: They include Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, Kik, Ask.fm, Tumblr, Google+, Yik Yak, OoVoo and Whisper are among the social media platforms and apps that Zorzakis recommended parents should research. The development and use of social networking apps is very dynamic and difficult to monitor.*

- *iTouch - which includes access to free apps like texting and chat (which do not require parental approval)*
- *Webkin toys with texting communication built in*
- *Kindle - access to books, games, movies*
- *Netflicks accounts on iPads*

"Smarty-pants" versus self-governing

One of the most common temptations of the modern parent is to seek control over the devices and their children. Parental control settings have limited value, more like the training wheels on a bike. Before long the child will master the device and the controls. Parental controls have value as instructive ways to engage and maintain an ongoing dialog with the child about purpose-driven use of the cyber tools.

When the use of parental controls are perceived as training wheels to help the child develop their own self control essential to be secure in the network, the signal conveyed to the child is one of confidence in their ability to become a responsible user. And so the aim of parenting with parental controls is to prepare the child to be in control, and for the parent to monitor in age-appropriate ways.

Today more than ever our children need this "discipline" at early ages. The moral compass communicated with use of parental control settings serves as an internal guidance system, and is the basis for personal security in a cyber-powered world that has the capacity to manipulate and exploit the individual. When our children are expected to make decisions and experience consequences, and given a birth to adjust their thinking and conduct, and then stand corrected; when we exude confidence in their ability to understand why certain behavior is not good for self and others, then it is possible to truly instill discipline.

Note: The word "discipline" is a noun derived from the Latin word "disciplina", teaching or learning. In Webster's Dictionary the first definition is "punishment". The remaining definitions pertain to instruction, self control and a system of rules governing conduct. What type of discipline do you want your child to experience? What discipline do you believe will strengthen your relationship with your child, and help her be secure?(Source: www.bananamoments.com)

Family-approved app list

The most important thing the modern parent can do is shed fear and worry about their child's encounters in the cyber wilderness. Worrying about the plethora of apps in the cyber social realm is not strategic. What is strategic is focusing your attention on who your child is and what interests them. In this regard, establishing a "family-approved app list" is a very effective way to maintain open dialogue about the applications and websites that are of interest to your child and provide guidance. The rites of passage are best implemented in reference to such a list of applications that indicates that there has been discussion and consideration whether the apps children have permission to use are actually making life better somehow, are age-appropriate and safe. Children understand the value of purpose and safety, especially when they are engaged as participants. Early on it is possible to explain to children that apps can contain malware that trick you into giving permission to access your personal information, so downloading apps, especially free ones, is not a trivial decision. It could expose you and your family to risks and that is how you lose control. Using "family-approved apps" helps everyone stay in control.

Cyber Rites of Passage – User Levels

Setting and maintaining age-appropriate boundaries in this web-enabled environment is a tricky one, and achievable. Ultimately the goal is to groom your child to be self-governing and responsible with the cyber-powered applications and tools.

Below are some suggested **"User Levels" 1 through 5** which can help establish clear markers for access to WWW-empowered applications. They are tied into the house rules (above) and when implemented consistently can provide good boundary setting experiences for personal development, security and empowerment into adulthood.

User Level 1: Tiny Tot (Two years and under)

The Tiny Tot requires limited use of screen time closely monitored. Keep it simple and keep in mind that mostly the *interface* infants and toddlers require is human.

According to Susan Kuchinskas, author of *Oxytocin Parenting: Womb through the Terrible Twos*, new brain science shows that the oxytocin response -- our ability to enjoy intimacy, trust and love -- is a learned response that primarily develops in the first three years of life. Kuchinskas suggests that during the first three years, parents engage the child in activities to develop a healthy oxytocin hormone response through feeding, bathing, and sleeping. Being mindful of these activities as more than biological functions will help get your child to a very healthy emotional start in life. Kuchinsakas cautions parents to be careful not to multi-task and rather devote full attention to the child during these basic care giving activities.

In a recent article in The Atlantic, *Touch-Screen Generation*, journalist Hanna Rosin, challenges the American Academy of Pediatrics study released in 2011 reinforced that screen time is not helpful for children under two years of age, and in fact, it could be harmful. No doubt this "non-user" level is challenging because the devices are shiny, seductive, omnipresent and keep the attention of the "non-user" freeing us to do more things. More personal time and attention is required on the part of the care giver if this "non-user level" is to be honored. Rosin, suggests that perhaps this "non-user" standard is a reflection of a neurosis of our parenting culture when it comes to technology; she observes the parenting culture becoming fearful that the technology will "sink" our children so we are anxious, forbidding it and over controlling it. She encourages parents to be more relaxed about allow young children to play with age-appropriate apps.

While we instinctively realize that babies bond through touch and eye contact, this idea of a tiny to "non-user" standard flies in the face of our modern lifestyle, and so it may seem not completely reasonable to expect such a standard to be enforced when there is so much to do, especially with multiple children, hectic schedules and careers to manage - and the mobile technology is tempting everyone.

Pediatrician Melissa Arca in Sacramento finds the AAP guidelines to give parents enough birth to form a starting point for their own screen rules. "It's not an end all be all," Arca said, "And we have to remember how dynamic and fluid our daily family lives are.

Some days our kids might spend no time on their screens and some days those minutes spent on screens can quickly add up to 2 hours. So context is very important."

The Tiny-Tot standard herein is presented for modern parents to seriously consider the things that I as an ancient cyber mom took for granted. Yes, I did bond with my children. We enjoyed bath time, reading before bed, and infant feedings were precious moments. And I also did not have a smart phone by my side when my children were really young. Texting and social media were not mainstream. Cyber-powered apps were in their infancy when my digital native was born in 1990 as the Internet became a household convenience with the advent of AOL and Netscape. So I was not really challenged with the same temptation that exists today as mobile devices and the networked communications and applications beckon us away from our primary, old-fashioned ways. Admittedly, this would have taken real discipline for me.

So I do not portend that I have successfully maintained this "non-user" level for infants and toddlers because it was not an option back then. In the ancient cyber parenting days, the "screen technology" was the television, which was difficult enough to regulate. But knowing what I do now about the adverse impact of mobile-app-induced distracted living on the emotional and mental well being of youth, were I a mother of an infant/toddler today, I would seriously consider the conditions of our family lifestyle and how to ensure that the *face-to-face requirements* of my "non-user" were not misdirected to gadgets.

And finally, Rosin does raise a good point about neurosis. It is important that we are not creating restrictions out of fear - rather, develop limitations as boundaries that have a purpose and express your confidence in your child to learn to be in charge of his own life.

User Level 2: Early Ranger (Three to five years old)

From three to five years of age, the device should be used with strict supervision. The child should not be left alone with the device and passwords are not granted. Applications or games that are permitted for the Early Ranger to use should be logged into the "family approved" app list for User Level 2.

The care giver must be able to see what the child is doing at all times. Kids this age learn passwords by osmosis and are intuitive about figuring out how to access and make applications work. I have heard many stories from parents whose very young children figured out passwords and learned how to access the family centric apps, like NetFlix, or the smart phone. These are digital natives. Make no mistake. They do not require training on how to access the tools; rather they require training and supervision on the boundaries for their safe use.

So don't leave them unattended with mobile devices. Ever.

Of course, this is the time when parental controls and filters should be in place for every application that your Early Ranger will be using, and your child should know what "family approved applications" are for the Early Ranger user. Have your child build the list of approved apps with you. This is the time to condition your child to refer to an "approved app" list because the rest of the world is encouraging folks to download over a billion apps (and counting) - many of them with questionable content.

Finally always keep the use of cyber technology a privilege, not a right. Establish some behavior criteria (honoring house rules, good citizenship) to use the device. If your Early Ranger complains about putting away the device at the appointed time, for example, this could be grounds for delaying the next opportunity to use it again. Always be specific, consistent and follow through.

User Level 3: Ranger (Six to 10 years old)

Children aged six to ten years of age are issued devices much like checking out a library book. They are issued the device (iPad, Notebook, video game) for a designated timeframe, and then returned. There is general oversight. The Rangers should not be left completely alone with the devices. There should be a responsible older user conducting random checks on the applications being used and what is happening on and off line.

This is the time to have conversations about the fact that there is NO PRIVACY in the network, and so your child should not be seeking privacy from parents or keeping secrets. Hence, random checks to inspect what you expect: good decisions on the part of your child.

You may want to tie Ranger user privileges to other criteria related to how well your child handles their responsibilities such as homework, chores, etc. As with the Early Ranger, age-appropriate parental controls and filters should be in place (and you may want to involve your child in which controls to set, etc. so they appreciate the boundaries that are set and why), and review with your child the "family approved applications" for the Ranger user. As with the Early Ranger, this list will probably be dynamic, as new applications surface and old ones lose their luster. Maintaining the Ranger-approved app list with your child is a great opportunity to bond around the values and standards for the safe use of the technology. By including the Ranger in the assessment and induction of "family-approved apps", your Ranger will also own the boundaries. They will belong to him, not as something forced onto him, but rather as a deliberate choice about the things that are worthy of his time and attention.

Social media: It is not recommended that Rangers have social media accounts, and if they must have a mobile phone, make sure the Parental controls are in place, that the texting plan is limited and that the phone is checked in and out in a secure place at designated times (when to do homework, family time, bed time). Making the phone a tool that is checked in and out will help maintain the premise that cyber technology is a privilege, not a right.

Other things to note: Free texting and face time apps (video chat) can be downloaded on the wireless mobile devices. So again, stressing that any application downloaded or used must be on their Ranger Approved App list is important. And then inspect what you expect: catch them doing things right. Conduct random checks to affirm that your child is honoring the boundaries and can be trusted to do the right thing when he graduates to User Level 4.

User Level 4: Junior Explorer (11- 15 years old)

At this point, your child has demonstrated that she understands the importance of setting boundaries regarding who has access to personal information (phone number, address, where attends school, etc.) and knowing the source of the apps being used. The "family approved list" may be expanded to included the new applications that interest your child as a Junior Explorer, and there should be an understanding to seek parental approval before downloading any new app.

Texting: Use of texting must be with the understanding that you will conduct random checks and that all the communications will be "E" for everyone. Drill it into them that there is NO PRIVACY in the net. As with the Ranger, free texting and video chat apps are easily accessed via wireless mobile devices, so be clear with our child about what apps you are approving for her on the family app listing and conduct random checks to verify that your child is successfully honoring the boundaries.

Social media: If it is possible to hold off until your child is 16 years old to create a Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, SnapChat, Kik, or other social media account - that would be ideal. For kids younger than 16, years old check out http://www.YourSphere.com - a kid friendly, digital hang out designed by kids and governed by cyber security experts to ensure that there is security in their social connections and content is appropriate.

Extra credit: Consider your Ranger to be the keeper of the family approved app listing, reinforcing the ownership of the setting of limits to establish personal security boundaries for the family. Your Ranger may also be a good steward of younger users in your home.

User Level 5: Explorer (16 years and older)

The Explorer user should be ready for social media. At this point, your child appreciates that there is no privacy, that you will be conducting random checks on texts and posts to social media. Periodically review and update the house rules for cyber secure communication with your child - especially if they are pushing for more freedoms. Listen and come up with ways to address their needs that are consistent with your family values. Have your child maintain a list of "approved" apps that she is using and review with you periodically. As with the Junior Explorer user, your Explorer should seek your approval before downloading apps - especially free ones which could contain malware and nefarious influences (including predators).

The fact that there is NO PRIVACY in the network is reinforced by random checks to posts and texts.

The focus of the wireless mobile device and apps is purpose-driven. It is being used in ways that improve or enhance daily life. There should be a designated time in the evening that the device is retired and turned into a central place.

Cyber Rites of Passage Worksheet

The primary objective of these cyber rites of passage is to train children to be in command of their own cyber world. The message is: "you are in charge of your own thoughts and actions, so use this power well."

Key concepts:
- *Rights and responsibilities*. Rights always come with responsibilities. These rites of passage give your child an opportunity to learn and grow into a responsible cyber-citizen, who is in command of their cyber world.
- *Status* – Your good standing as a member of the family who can be trusted to be responsible and safe in the use of on-line tools and communications. Every user lever denotes greater responsibility and demonstrated good judgment, and therefore signifies higher status.
- *Trustworthy* – Someone who is kind, considerate of others, loyal, reliable, honest and honors the house rules. (Ref: 1 Cor. 13:4-7)

Your Cyber User Levels

Age	Name	User Level (i.e., Early Ranger (Level 2) , Ranger (Level 3), etc.)

USER LEVEL (Age/Handle or Screen Name) _____
   1. Supervision/Autonomy

___Constant supervision
___Strict supervision (no password access)
___Monitored supervision (password access granted)

2 Family Approved App list
(List the apps that are approved for this user including texting and social media)

_____

3. **Check in time for devices:** _____ (time of day that on-line activity stops/devices turned in for re-charging)
4. **Maximum length of time on devices**: _____
5. **Other Schedule information:** (such as homework time on-line)
6. **After school hours of use:** _____
7. **Weekends hours of use:** _____
8. **Demonstrated understanding for next level:**
   - Concept of privacy/personal security
   - Honors house rules
   - Engages in good conversations about on-line activities
   - Shows good judgment
   - On-line communications reflect family values

About Banana Moments Foundation

The advent of the internet and wireless devices has introduced a power crisis for families. Never before has so much communication power with the world been in the hands of children. And by the same token this crisis is an opportunity to strengthen parent-child bonds around faith as an executive movement to be free from undue influences of texting and social media. This individual resiliency comes from within; from knowing that personal power is something that cannot be taken, but it can be surrendered.

Some of the undue influences of internet-powered communications include:

- Cyberbullying, suicide and murderous violence
- Sexual predators
- Addictions (including video games, devices, drugs and alcohol)
- Distracted living creating learning issues and driver safety issues
- Over dependence upon cyber-powered peer communities contributing to anxiety and depression

Accordingly, Banana Moments Foundation was founded to provide training and education about the role of God in a free society as the genuine authority to express discipline at home and train children about their own executive capacity to be free agents in the flesh and in the social network.

The BMF Vision
Promote a parenting and family culture that inspires certain authority and confidence to govern our lives with clarity of purpose and to overcome the undue influences of the social network (bullying, pedophiles, drug and alcohol culture, all forms of media agendas, commercialism).

The BMF Mission
Inform, inspire and educate parents to recognize the power of their own faith, i.e. what you believe, as a practical application to 1) strengthen genuine, authentic bonds with their children, and 2) overcome the bullying pressure of the social network and global economic trending.

Freedom is an inside job. It is first a state of heart and mind that strives for liberty and seeks wisdom about how to respond to the manipulations of our time. By the

same token, the social network seduces us into believing things that are not true, and subjects us to manipulations that seek to control how we perceive ourselves and define our world. In the social network, "home" is a place where 'news feeds' from various sources, some beneficial, many others benign or nefarious, stream in seeking our undivided attention. Even with privacy settings, the "feed" is pushing numerous agendas, connections with bad actors or commercial entities seeking to exploit any affection and affiliation from relationships. Ultimately the cyber-powered network seeks to redirect our thoughts to things that don't really matter and are not necessarily true. There is no shortage of headlines from the murderous rampages of youth (school shootings), to pedophile easy access to children exposing their vulnerabilities (believing that it is safe to confide with the crowd), and cyberbullying and suicides, and relentless commercial pressure to purchase goods and services deemed most "liked".

Personal security is not found in the physical and cyber realms; it is housed in the realm of hearts and minds which are built upon a foundation of beliefs and values shared as a culture which can respect or exploit the individual. So what you believe about power really matters. And the big questions for parents and children in a cyber powered world are:

- How much power will you give up in order to be accepted?
- How do we recognize manipulation when we encounter it?
- What are the lies that obscure truth?

Restoring the meaning of "home" as the place to be: Fresh Start
The main program BMF offers is training for parents on building a family culture that instills individual resiliency in us and our children. The curriculum is entitled: *Fresh Start Family Culture Builder for Household Executives*, which will also become a self-help book with lessons and exercises, and access to trainers. This high impact, basic training offers parents:

- In depth understanding of the cultural landscape our children navigate today and how children are conditioned differently for authority and the opportunity for strengthening family bonds this represents
- Explains the strategic importance and elements of a family culture
- Instructions on building a family culture in very practical, high impact ways
- Simple, effective ways for parents to clarify their own beliefs and values at home

- How to communicate beliefs and values to their children with a passion for the child's liberty and their ability to be self governing
- Simple steps to engage children to develop house rules predicated upon your core beliefs and values that teach kids how to be free agents in the flesh and in the social network

To learn more, go to: [Banana Moments Foundation](#)