

advertisement



Inspired. By Canon.
 Print your vision and learn more at
www.usa.canon.com/proprinters

Canon

 **msnbc.com**

Teens panic as they're forced to unplug at camp

Parents who are accustomed to constant contact with kids are anxious

The Associated Press

updated 7:44 p.m. ET, Thurs., May 14, 2009

NEW YORK - Tim Chai keeps in touch with friends through Facebook, listens to music on his iPod and never goes anywhere without his BlackBerry.

So when the 17-year-old was looking for a summer camp, he ruled out a church camp with a no cell phone, no computer policy.

"I just thought it was too much for me to handle," said Tim, of Carmel, Ind. "I love my Internet. I love my phone. I'm not ashamed to say it."

For a generation used to texting, Facebook and YouTube, going away to sleepaway camp can be a bit unnerving. Many outdoor camps don't allow cell phones, laptops or iPods, and there is no computer lab for them to update their pages.

Many campers are "a little panicked" to part with their cell phones, said Tony Sparber, founder of New Image Camps, with locations in Florida and Pennsylvania. Some try to smuggle them in or bring more than one phone in case one is confiscated, he said.

Even parents who are used to having constant access to their kids can experience anxiety.

Kimberley Fink, 40, of Weston, Mass., is a little nervous about her 14-year-old daughter who is going away to camp for the first time. The camp lasts for two weeks and her daughter won't be able to call.

"It makes me slightly uneasy," said Fink. "I will probably be one of the mothers who calls the camp office after a couple of days to check in. Sometimes you just need that reassurance."

Dave Steinberg, owner and director of Canteen Roads Teen Travel Camp out of Huntington, N.Y., said most parents ask about the no-cell-phone policy out of concern for their children's safety.

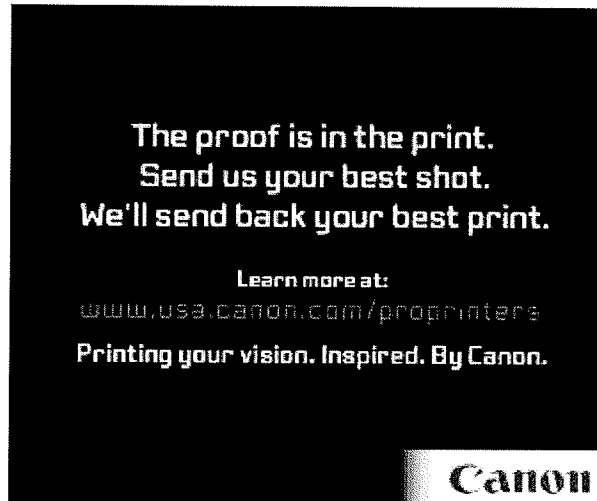
To reassure them, he gives them his cell phone number and campers a prepaid calling card. He also uploads photos to a password protected site that the parents can access.

Experts agree that unplugging is a great idea. But it will be a "shock to the system" for those who are digitally dependent, says Anastasia Goodstein, author of "Totally Wired: What Teens and Tweens Are Really Doing Online."

Some like Chai may be reluctant to go to a camp for that reason, said Gary Rudman of GTR Consulting, author of the upcoming 2009 gTrend Report, which focuses on teens and technology.

Sean Hakim, 16, struggled to give up his gadgets for two weeks when he went to Antiochian Village Camp

advertisement



**The proof is in the print.
 Send us your best shot.
 We'll send back your best print.**

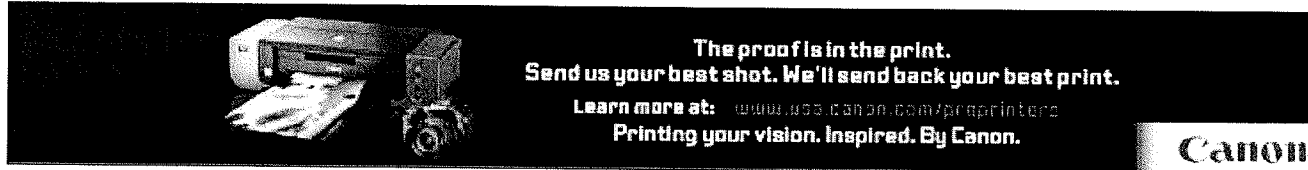
Learn more at:
www.usa.canon.com/proprinters

Printing your vision. Inspired. By Canon.

Canon

Print Powered By  **Format Dynamics**

advertisement



The proof is in the print.
Send us your best shot. We'll send back your best print.
 Learn more at: www.usa.canon.com/proprinters
Printing your vision. Inspired. By Canon.

 **msnbc.com**

in Pennsylvania. The camp does not allow cells or iPods and campers have no computer access.

"At first, it was scary," admits Sean, of River Vale, N.J. But he said, "once you get there, you realize you don't really need it. You are always with people, doing something."

Plugged in teens are under tremendous pressure to maintain "Brand Me" on Facebook and other social networking sites, said Rudman. Without a cell phone or online access, it's like they are invisible.

And while teens will inevitably make friends at camp, 10 friends in your bunk is not the same as hundreds on Facebook, he said.

"The dilemma for camps is that if they do allow technology, the kids will likely plug in and tune out," said Rudman, adding that being off the grid may be the best thing for chill-challenged teens. "That would defeat the purpose of camp."

When camp starts, plugged-in children may feel a little disoriented, like a part of them is missing, said Dr. Michael Assel, associate professor of pediatric psychiatry at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Those feelings should subside as children get involved in camp activities, he said.

Campers say that's what usually happens. They forget about their lost social connections much like they forget about television.

"They keep you so busy, you are having so much fun, I forget about the computer. I forget about Facebook," said Max Truen, 15, of Dix Hills, N.Y., who goes to New Image Camp's Camp Pocono Trails each summer.

So what happens when camp is over? Do teens give up texting? Or Facebook?

Not a chance. They have more friends.

Copyright 2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30752321/>

MSN Privacy . Legal © 2009 MSNBC.com

advertisement



Inspired. By Canon.
 Print your vision and learn more at
www.usa.canon.com/proprinters

Print Powered By 