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My Concepts of Privacy

As an individual I highly value my privacy, even though the amount of my personal privacy has decreased since I was a kid. A majority of how I feel about privacy is based off of my parents and older sisters. They were the ones I have always looked up to, learned from and feel most comfortable with. The earliest I can remember that I kept some sort of privacy was in elementary school. I was very private and quiet during these times, especially at school and in front of strangers. I kept my grades from my classmates to see. I didn't raise my hand to answer a question even if I knew it was correct. I didn't even raise my hand to ask the teacher to go to the bathroom one time because I didn't want the class to know I had to go. Some would say this is just being shy, but it is also having secrecy from others. I never liked people getting into my business.

It was a different story at home with my family. I did not have much privacy at home with two older sisters and my parents. I also shared a room with either one of my sisters or both of them at once some times. We were all very close when we were young, but we did keep our own secrets. Even though I am the youngest, I acted like the "middleman" a lot. When one of my sisters would tell me something or I'd find out about something I wasn't supposed to, I'd bribe them to keep it a secret. I've told this to some of my friends and they relate the Jewish stereotypes to this because our family is Jewish. When we were younger, we bribed each other for candy and as we got older we would bribe each other with money. As we got older, my oldest sister never did much that she needed to keep secret, so it remained between my middle sister and I. However, now we don't bribe each other with anything. Maybe it is because the whole family doesn't live

together and we have grown up. We will now tell each other things that we don't want our parents to know and it is understood to not tell them. There is no need for bribes anymore because we have grown up and can trust each other well. It is wonderful now that we trust each other and don't need to bring money into the situation. When I have kids, I don't want my children to hide things from me. I hid things from my parents that could have resulted in a terrible way. My sister snuck out of the house many times, only to find out that she was seeing a guy in a gang. I should have told my parents when I found out, but I didn't because she paid me to keep a secret. I will be sure to make it clear to my children that nothing needs to be hidden from me. If they want to see a boy or girl, they can have them over. Sneaking out should not be an option.

When we were very young, my parents would have my sisters and I bathe together. There was no privacy in this act and it didn't matter because we weren't at the age of when we knew our bodies were not to be shown around the house. I still remember when my oldest sister started puberty, it was so weird for my other sister and I. I was almost curious as to what my body would do. We didn't act very different about things until my middle sister reached puberty. We started closing the door when we showered and telling the other to turn away when we changed. I started hiding my body probably sooner than I needed to, but I soon learned to treat my sisters as we did with our dad. I was to hide my naked body from them. I never kept my body private from my mom, as we still go to the bathroom with the other still in the room. She doesn't hide her body from me, which made me comfortable in not hiding my body from her.

It took me awhile to get used to changing in front of other females. Physical education in middle school was a huge blindside for me. I was not comfortable changing

in the locker room for P.E. in front of 30 other girls I barely knew. Even though I felt comfortable with my body and knew they all had the same parts, I felt like my body was completely different. Sometimes I'd go to the bathroom to change in secrecy in a stall. Not until 8th grade did I start feeling comfortable with the situation. My friends and I started going shopping together and trying on clothes in the same dressing room. Learning to not be so private with my body with friends made it easier to change in front of female strangers.

Both of my sisters and my mother enjoy talking on the phone, which caused conflict at times. When we used the houses line, there was no doubt the call would be interrupted or my sister would try to listen in on another phone. Luckily in 8th grade, I got my own cell phone. I did have a limited number of minutes, but it allowed me to have my personal conversations without interruptions. I still had to find a place to talk without intrusions. Then I was introduced to texting, which solved all privacy issues for communicating. However, we only had one computer in the house and my parents had access to our accounts. I think this limited my computer use, but did so in a good way. I didn't visit sites I wasn't supposed to. My parents did give us freedom on the computer for everything, which held us responsible for our own actions.

I feel like the most privacy issues I've dealt with are when I had many girl friends in middle school and high school. So much drama was caused due to trust issues. Everyone talked about everyone else and once a crush was announced, the whole group or a whole class knew within a couple days. I got stuck in the middle of so much drama because my friends trusted me and I trusted them, but there was only so much I could keep inside. I got so sick of my "friends" that I transferred high schools. Girls are

curious, caring, and friendly, but they can also be disloyal, illogical, and disrespectful. These girls influenced me to do things that got me in trouble with teachers, my parents, and even the police. Maybe it was just high school and they have reconsidered their values. Either way, I have learned many things from being friends with the wrong people.

After switching high schools, my initial trust level when meeting someone new was lower than it had been in the past. Another reason I switched high schools is because I was bullied for my religion. There was one boy that had mutual friends with me and he always had something mean to say to me, whether it was me being Jewish, about my weight, my glasses, or that my friends were “more” attractive than me. He wasn’t the only one that made remarks about my religion. When I went to college, I decided to not let my religion be known. Unfortunately it got out on my dorm floor anyways and I was not invited to a party because they didn’t like my Jewish “mannerisms”. After this incident, I decided to not care anymore what people thought about my religion. It was their loss if they didn’t want to be my friend and I found great friend in other dorm buildings anyways. Now I live with three guys and my privacy is pretty limited, but I’d rather have less privacy than drama.

My concept of privacy has evolved pretty dramatically. I used to keep secrets from my parents and now my family is very communicative and open. I used to trust friends too quickly into the friendship and now it takes a good while until I can fully trust them. The only people I fully trust and don’t keep anything private from is my boyfriend and my family. In order for me to not hide things from someone and keep private about stuff is if I trust them and feel comfortable with them. I am glad I have learned when to trust someone and not later on in life.

