



The Potters Bar Consortium

Would you let your teen holiday with friends?

With summer now upon us, a regular dilemma faced by parents contacting the leading parent support charity, Parentline Plus is whether or not to allow older teens to go on holiday on their own for the first time.

Teenagers may well want to go on holiday with friends or a boyfriend or girlfriend rather than with their family, especially if their friends are allowed to go away on their own, but it's not easy for a parent to make this decision.

Jeremy Todd, Chief Executive of Parentline Plus, said: *"It's certainly not easy making such a decision and it can bring real mixed emotions, given that your son or daughter wants to break away from you but you want them to be safe. You have to make a decision based on your child, and not be swayed by pressure, as teens mature at different rates and so what might be appropriate for one family may not be for another."*

"We at Parentline Plus are always here to offer free and confidential parent to parent support 24 7 and, based on feedback from parents calling our Parentline or attending our parenting groups, we have put together some useful pointers to think about before having this discussion with your teenager."

Major worries for parents in this situation are the dangers of alcohol and drugs and the risk of holiday romances and unprotected sex. Thousands of parents contact Parentline Plus, which is the biggest independent provider of parent support in the country, about these issues every year. Parentline Plus can provide tips on how parents can talk to their children about sex, relationships and responsibilities to help keep them safe.

If your teen is under 16, many resorts and campsites will not take bookings from unaccompanied under 16-year-olds. So this can be helpful in putting an end to discussions. There are however alternatives such as organised holidays which tend to be activity or camping holidays with responsible adults to watch out for them.

The charity's leaflet 'The Real Picture' provides a wealth of information to help parents keep their teenagers safe and highlights issues from having safer sex to drugs and drink – this can be downloaded from the website or ordered via Parentline 0808 800 2222.

Tips on teenagers alone on holiday:

- Talk openly about what you see as the potential dangers in a practical way so that they don't tune out
- Don't over focus on anxieties and concerns – remember it is supposed to be fun for them
- Make contact with their friends' parents so that you can share contact details and information

- Ensure they have credit on their mobile phones and that they are charged and make a deal with them to text you every couple of days (check with the phone company that this is possible if holidaying abroad)
- If they meet someone and have a holiday romance, remind them of making safe decisions when it comes to having sex. Talk about choices and contraception
- Make them aware of drinks being spiked and not putting themselves in vulnerable situations. Remind them of safety in pairs
- Ensure they have access to a bank account or emergency money, eg, in case they need to pay for healthcare upfront abroad
- Get informed and talk about drugs, especially if they are likely to go to a club
- Talk about drinking alcohol in moderation, especially when mixed with the hot sun
- Expect to wake up in the night worrying and hoping they are ok – this is normal!

For more tips, including advice for traveling abroad visit the Parentline Plus website at www.parentlineplus.org.uk or www.gotateenager.org.uk.

Parentline 0808 800 22 22

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