



In the DRIVER'S SEAT

By Wendy Kenney

For parents, sending a child out on his or her first date can be just as terrifying as letting a son or daughter get behind the wheel of a car for the first time. But eventually, as teens log more hours of trustworthy driving, parents become more comfortable with turning the car keys over to them. Does the same hold true for dating? Will your parents be more comfortable with your dating as you demonstrate that you can be trusted? It all depends on the type of relationship you have with your parents.

Map your plans

If you've built a relationship of trust with your parents through years of open, honest communication, then they are more apt to trust you as you venture out on dates. But whether you're hanging out with a group at a friend's house or going on a date, it is normal for your parents to ask you about your plans. And you will increase their trust in you if you are prepared to give specific answers.

Of course, they'll ask the obvious questions: Who are you going with? Where are you going? What are you doing? When will you be home? They may also want to know who's paying, who's driving, or what movie you'll be watching. And they may want to be assured that your friend's parents will be home if you are planning to go to their house.

If you're wondering why your parents need to know so much, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has given the answer: "If you are old enough to date, you are old enough to know that your parents have not only the right but the sacred obligation, and they are under counsel from the leaders of the Church, to concern themselves with your dating habits" ("You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 6).

Steer your dating toward parental trust, and you may get a break instead of a brake.



Accelerate communication

Some teens have a very open relationship with their parents and willingly tell them about their plans before the date. Then they come home and recount the entire evening. On the other hand, some teens are more private and may even resent having to supply so much information to their parents. Which type are you? Are you more conversational or more close-lipped? Consider what one mother confided about her family: the teenage daughter who is more open in her communication with her parents tends to get more freedom than her less communicative sister. If you're on the tight-lipped side of the scale, try offering information to your parents *before* they ask. You may be pleasantly surprised at how easy it is when you initiate the conversation and are already prepared with answers.

"I like telling my parents what I'm planning to do when I go on a date. I feel like they trust me more," explains Aubrey from Pleasant View, Utah. "And when they trust me more, I can do more things, because they don't worry about me."

Oh, and one more thing: be honest. Parents know when you're not being completely honest with them.



TALK TO YOUR PARENTS

"Be open with your parents. Communicate with them. Discuss with them your problems. Have prayer with them before a date. . . . 'Honour thy father and mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee' (Ex. 20:12)."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 9).

Certainly, outright lying is wrong and will damage your relationship with your parents, as will breaking a promise to them. That's essentially what you do when you don't come home when you say you'll be home or when you do something different from what you said you would do. To respect and honor your parents, and for your own protection, you need to inform your parents of a change in plans. Never hesitate to keep them informed. And if one of your parents calls you while you're on a date, answer your phone. You may assume your mom is just checking up on you, but more likely she has some important information to share. Just as you would never ignore your parents if they were speaking to you in person, you should never ignore a call from home while you're on a date. Make a good impression on the person you're with by showing them how well you can get along with Mom and Dad.

Pull over for parents

Do you want to impress your date's parents? Tell your date you'd like to meet his or her parents. *For the Strength of Youth* counsels, "Make sure your parents meet those you date" ([2001], 25). After your date introduces you to them, tell them a little about yourself and how much you appreciate being able to go out with their son or daughter. It may be a bit uncomfortable at first, but it will earn you their trust and approval, which goes a long way in the world of dating.

As Nick from Sandy, Utah, explains, "It's always scary meeting my date's parents for the first time, but what her parents think of me is important. If they like me, it may affect whether she likes me or not." Nick says he follows his father's counsel—stand up straight, look them in the eye, and give them a firm handshake.

Whether it's maintaining open, honest communication with your own parents, or taking the time to make a good impression on your date's parents, the more informed you keep both sets of parents, the more trust you'll earn for yourself and your date. **NE**



RESCUE PLAN

It's important to talk to your parents about what to do if you find yourself in an unsafe or uncomfortable situation while you're on the dating road. Some families have a code word or phrase that alerts the parents that someone's in trouble and they need to be rescued. One father explains, "If my daughter calls and says, 'Dad, Joe's here,' I know she's in trouble and I need to go pick her up."

Make sure you always have a way to phone your parents. If you don't have a cell phone of your own, but your parents do, ask if you can borrow it to take it with you on a date. If you can't reach your parents, call a relative, a youth leader, or even your bishop to come get you.



FAMILY INTERSECTION

For the *Strength of Youth* suggests, "Invite your dates to activities with your family" (25). Ask your parents if you can bring a date on a family outing. Your parents will be pleased to meet someone you're dating, and your date will be glad to get to know your family in a more informal setting.