

Lying 18-year-old can't get parents to trust her ... go figure

Dear Harlan,
I'm having a hard time dealing with my parents. I'm 18 years old and living at home, but I'll be going off to college soon. I love to party and have a good time whether it's with alcohol or not. This summer, I started hanging out with a different crowd as opposed to my high school friends. My parents have heard things about my new friends' past and they are not pleased. I've told my mom that we are responsible and she seems to believe me, but as soon as I ask to go out with them my parents want to know where we are going, what we are doing and exactly who I'm going to be with. I feel like I can't tell my parents the truth because they'll disapprove, so I lie and say I'm going to a movie or something. It makes me feel terrible to lie to them. How can I make my parents understand that I don't do bad things when I'm with my friends?

Guilty girl

Dear Guilty,
I'd be lying if I thought your parents were wrong, but I know how you feel about lying, so, I'll just be honest. You're lucky to have parents who care enough to want to know where you're going and what you're doing. If

you want to be treated like an adult start acting like an adult. When they ask you these questions, take this as a chance to have an adult conversation. DO NOT get upset. DO NOT get defensive. Listen, wait and then respond. Try explaining what it is you need for them to understand and see where it takes you. But



HARLAN

understand this isn't only about you. There are a lot of people out there who can put your safety in danger. I get so many letters from so many girls who hang out at "the movies" and accidentally get in bad situations. While your parents might seem overprotective, they have good reason to be concerned. If you can't be honest, maybe you should honestly start seeing more movies.

Dear Harlan,
I am a licensed therapist and the one issue that comes up on a consistent basis is "I got married instead of going to college, had

ADVICE Help Me Harlan

kids, did everything I could to be a good wife and mother, and now I resent the hell out of the fact that nobody appreciates me and I haven't a clue as to who in the heck I am." I, too, can relate to the previous sentence because this is the life I led for 15 years before going back to college and getting my bachelor's and master's degrees.

I, too, was 18 when I decided life would be perfect if I skipped college and married my boyfriend of four years. I would be able to do whatever I wanted and get away from my parents. Guess what? That feeling lasts about as long as it takes to move your stuff into another man's home and realize that you've traded one dependent situation for another. I also didn't take into account the resentment that started to well up when my husband went on to bigger and more exciting work opportunities and I was just grateful to be invited to a Tupperware party.

I did start taking the occasional community college class, but college still seemed unimportant

and unnecessary along with the fact that it interfered with my husband's work schedule and took away time from when we could do fun things together. The two kids that followed kept growing and needed my loving guidance and presence less and less. In this day and age of two family incomes, there are fewer stay-at-home moms to gather into a weekly coffee klatch resulting in increasing isolation and loneliness.

The time came that a divorce was inevitable, as we had grown too far apart. I didn't plan on being a single mom, and now I was faced with having to earn a living and not having the training to work in much beyond a minimum pay position. Not a week went by that I wished I had gone to college as originally planned, done some traveling, lived alone for a while, spread my wings, and "sowed some wild oats." I had made a choice to skip that step and not experience the opportunity to be independent and learn to trust my ability to take care of myself.

I only wish that I could let young women who are struggling with the decision to marry right away, or to not go to college, sit in on my psychotherapy groups and hear the resounding anger,

frustration and resentment that crops up after years of placing your focus on your family without balancing it with educational pursuits, and trying other avenues of life, before you become tied down with the responsibility of home and family.

Therapist and a mom

Dear Mom,

But, yes, it can also work out and some readers shared great success stories. But even those who found happiness also found a passion to kept them challenged while the kids were napping or away at school. There's no greater responsibility than taking care of a family, but a mom also needs to take care of herself. Four years in college is a small price to pay for a lifetime of answers and opportunity. Thanks again for all the letters.

You can check out more replies online at www.helpmeharlan.com. Harlan is not a licensed psychologist, therapist or physician, but he is a licensed driver. Write Harlan via e-mail at harlan@helpmeharlan.com. Send paper to Help Me, Harlan! Harlan Cohen
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