

Great expectations . . . for your new-found babysitter

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

Tonight is the night. You're ready. You've been planning this for weeks. You are finally going out without the kids!

Maybe you haven't had a teen sitter before, but you checked with all your mom friends and gathered the names of theirs. By the way, if that doesn't pan out, call your local high school. The women in the front office know who the good kids are and will probably be able to help you out.

How far away does the sitter live? Can she drive? Are you picking her up? (For our purposes, we'll assume you've hired a girl.) Always offer a ride, even if she drives. It's polite and she's doing you a favor. If she lives close enough or wants to drive, she'll let you know whether she would rather do so herself.

This is the time to address a big issue. I learned my lesson about bringing friends when my oldest was a baby and my husband and I were going to a Mardi Gras ball. Our sitter showed up (she was the neighbor's daughter) with her boyfriend. Um, no. I panicked. I didn't want him there, but I sure didn't want to miss the big party. I told her he could stay for a minute, but had to leave before we did. Appar-

ently, she hadn't wanted to sit for us from the beginning, so she took that opportunity to cancel. Right there in my house. Thankfully, her parents felt awful and babysat for us (which I was way more comfortable with anyway).

Here in Oregon, we totally lucked out with a great babysitter right next door. Perfect!

What else should you expect from your sitter? You shouldn't expect anything if you haven't talked about it with her. Is it dinner time? Then you should provide dinner, and let her know what to do with the dishes when they are done. Be specific. Where do the leftovers go? Are the kids allowed dessert? What kind? How much?

Do you want her to be on her phone or watching TV all night, or maybe after the kids go to bed? If you don't, just tell her that you've told the kids no electronics tonight and set out a bunch of board games for them to play. She should get the hint. If it's okay after the kids go to bed, tell her that. Let her know what kinds of shows you don't allow in your home, and decide ahead of time if you will give her the wi-fi password. Better to be upfront about it than annoyed when you get home. Be sure she

knows how to work the television so that she doesn't get stuck and end up having to read the book she brought with her or finishing her homework. Sorry, reminiscing.

Tell her that whatever gets taken out needs to be put away before the kids go to bed. Describe your bedtime routine (brushing teeth, lights out, etc.). That should cover any issues with messes and fights.

Good babysitters will tell you how the evening went. Great babysitters will be honest. Superb babysitters will write down what they all did on her American Girl Babysitting Kit notepad. Jealous? (I told you I lucked out.)

So you went out, had an amazing time, and you're back. I always text my sitter when we are on our way back so she is not surprised when the front door opens. Make sure you have enough cash to pay her, and have it out so that you aren't awkwardly rummaging through your purse. I've never known any teen sitter who charges a set amount for sitting, but I always ask a new sitter if she has one. Every single one has said that the people just pay them whatever they feel like. It's best to ask other moms in your area how much they pay.

I generally pay \$10 per hour (three kids) when the kids are awake and \$5 after they go to bed. So, if we're gone from 5:00-10:00 and the children go to bed at 8:00, that's \$40.

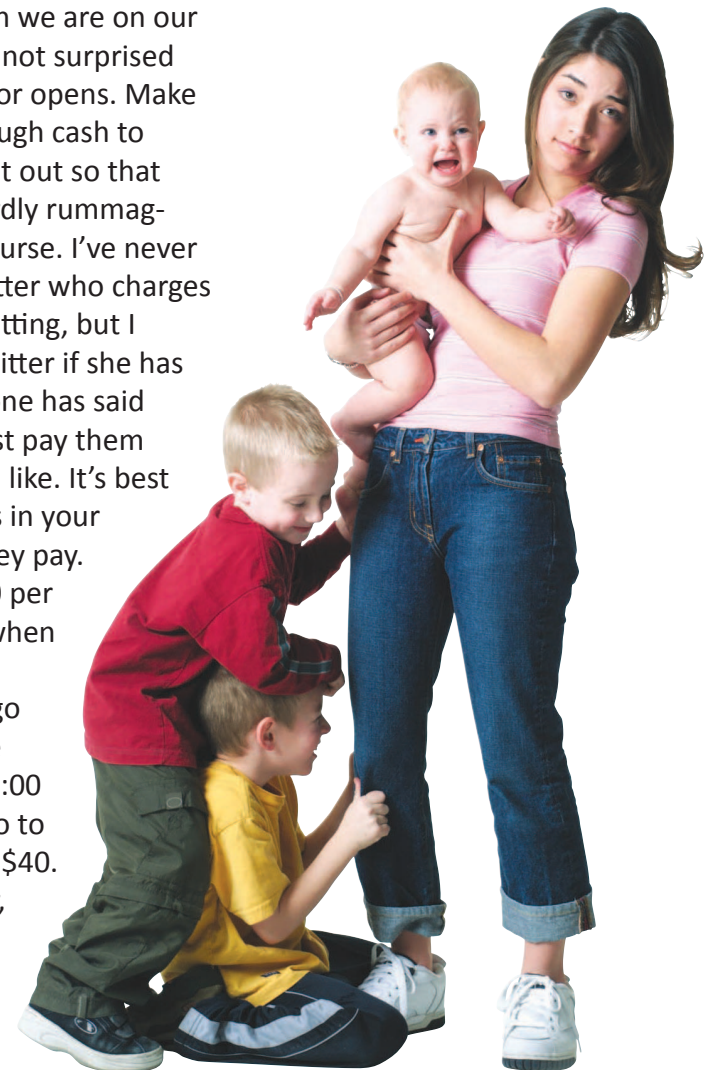
If you drove her, take her home. If it's dark and she walked more than what you



Strategies

can see from your house, drive her home. If she walked less than a few houses, watch her from your front yard. I would advise not letting her walk home in the dark as you are responsible to see that she gets home safely. I'm sure she'll be more than happy to come back again.

Suzanne Kennedy is a former middle school teacher who lives in Pendleton with her husband and three children.



CAPECO - Main Office
721 SE 3rd Suite D • Pendleton
541-276-1926

CAPECO - Airport Location
1605 NW 50th Street • Pendleton
541-276-5073

“Assisting people to become independent, healthy and safe.”

We Offer Help With:

- Housing/ Homeownership
- Employment/ Training Services
- Emergency Services
- Food/ Nutrition
- Senior Services
- Energy Services

