

Ask Miriam...

Individuals and families in the community are faced with challenging issues and concerns regarding their social, emotional and psychological health. Through the cooperation of **The Jewish World**, Jewish Family Services will offer responses.

Q. Dear Miriam,

We are in the holiday period and I am distressed at the number of children who roam the synagogue unsupervised during services.

My son is 10 and this seems to be a problem age.

The teens at least are not usually rowdy. They tend to get together and talk, but the younger children run around a lot and get very noisy and at times do unsafe things. My son wants to be part of the group and feels left out if I insist he stays with us.

I know there are a lot of hours spent in synagogue during the holidays, but do you have any suggestions on ending this problem?

Holiday Dilemma

A. Dear Holiday Dilemma,

A solution to this problem is a joint one between parents and the congregation.

Many of the congregations have age appropriate services for children and teens. It is up to the parents to see that the children attend these services even if it means supervising their attendance. The group leaders need your support and help to let the children know that they are expected to be at those services. For the other times when there are no youth services, you and other parents need to take responsibility for what your children are doing.

Speak to the education director, executive director, or rabbi about forming a group of volunteer parents to rotate taking charge of activities for the children during the open time periods.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

Our daughter is old enough to drive, but she doesn't have a permit yet. She has been asking us to take her to get the permit, but we are uncomfortable with her driving at this age. Many of her friends do have permits and some even have their licenses. We are uncomfortable with her going out with any of her friends as we think that they might let her try to drive a car.

Are we being too restrictive?

Do you have any suggestions on how to handle this situation?

Driving Troubled Parents

A. Dear Driving Troubled Parents,

First, I think you need to reflect on the reasons you don't want your daughter driving. Is it because of past behaviors on her part or general concerns you have about teens driving? Sit down with her and have an honest discussion. Together establish ground rules about her driving and going out with friends who drive.

Decide on a timetable for her to get her permit.

Remember, you have the supervision when she has a permit.

If you allow her to get a permit, you may feel that under your supervision she is capable of developing good driving skills.

However, driving, as with any other activities with teens is based on a trust that rules and boundaries will be honored.

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Miriam Adler, A.C.S.W., C.S.W., is assistant director of J.F.S. She answers most frequently asked questions. Please send questions to "Ask Miriam," c/o Jewish Family Services of NENY, 877 Madison Ave., Albany, NY 12208 or e-mail madler@jfsneny.org or call 518-482-8856.