Curfew on break? Is my mom joking?! [1]

Alice,

I just went home for my first Thanksgiving break, and my mother had the nerve to try to give me a curfew! I told her that I am safe, don't drink, and have tame friends, but that we like to hang out until late because we haven't seen each other for so long. Well, on my last night home, I fell asleep hanging out at my boyfriend's house. I woke up at 3:30 A.M. and even though I wanted to stay, I went home because of my mother. She was awake when I arrived, and furious! Those hours with my boyfriend and friends are precious, and I hate having to feel guilty, worry, or dread about going home when all my other friends are relaxed and having fun. What can I do? Am I being unreasonable?

?Time warped by mom

Answer

Dear Time warped by mom,

Going home from college for the first time can definitely feel like a time warp that sends you back to high school for you and for your loved ones. College brings newfound independence, and it's fair to expect the same freedoms at home. However, it may take a while for your mom to see her daughter as a responsible adult instead of a teenager that she needs to wait up for at night. In the meantime, you might try thinking about the curfew from your mom's point of view, and then talk with her to work out a good compromise.

Even though your mom's curfew feels unfair, it might help to put yourself in her shoes. It sounds like your mom may have several reasons why she's worried about you being out late at night. Is she concerned about you getting into a car accident if you're tired while driving home? Is she uncomfortable with the idea of you spending a night at your boyfriend's house? Or maybe she just misses you being away from home and feels jealous that you're spending so much time with friends? Think back to your relationship with your mom during high school? was curfew an issue then? If so, it makes sense that she still worries about you staying out late even though you may have gained a lot of independence away at college.

At some point, when you both feel relaxed, you can try having an adult-to-adult conversation with your mother about the curfew. Explain what you've noticed about her behavior, and how it makes you feel. For example, when your mom demands that you come home at a certain time, does that make you feel like she doesn't trust you to make good decisions? Do you want her to know how much it means to you to spend time with your friends, or how much you miss
your boyfriend? Don't forget to listen to your mom's feelings too.

Once you've both had a chance to vent your concerns, try working together to find a compromise that's fair to both of you. Your mom seems to like your friends, so maybe they could meet you at your house, so that your mother knows that you are all together and safe. Maybe your boyfriend could visit you at your mother's place, or even stay the night... stranger things have happened. Your friends might also have good advice about negotiating the curfew.

Going to college is a big transition for you; it can also be tough for parents who are left with an empty (or emptier) nest. Try using this conflict as an opportunity to demonstrate your maturity by negotiating a fair compromise. Although it may not happen overnight, your mom may worry less about you staying out late as she witnesses your responsibility, maturity, and concern for her feelings.

Alice!
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