



Exit(X)Plan

Establishing Family Trust And Giving Teens A Way Out Of Harmful Situations



The Issue:

At one time or another, most teenagers find themselves in uncomfortable and possibly dangerous situations. It might be a party where everyone else is drinking and using drugs, or it could be a situation in which they're being pressured to have sex or even break the law. And most of the time, when teens find themselves in these scenarios, they are with people they aren't supposed to be with, or at places they shouldn't be.

This can create quite a dilemma for a teenager. Should they call a parent and risk getting in trouble, or should they stay and go along with the situation they find themselves in? Fortunately, there's a helpful solution to this problem that can help keep teens safe



What is the (X) Plan?

The X Plan is a simple safety solution.

When a teenager ends up in a **dangerous situation** without their parents' knowledge or consent—for example, at a party with **friends who are drinking**—they text their parent the letter **X**. Teens and parents then follow a prewritten script, something along the lines of the following:

Teenager: "Hello?"

Parent: "Something has come up, and I need to come and get you right now."

Teenager: "What happened?"

Parent: "I'll explain when I get there. See you in five minutes."

Then the teenager can tell their friends that their parent called, something happened at home, and they need to be picked up. This way, teens don't face their friends' ridicule. In addition, putting the X Plan into effect means that kids don't have to share details of the situation with parents if they don't want to. They are allowed to say as little or as much as they wish—even if it's clear that they lied to their parents earlier in the day about what they were doing or where they were going to be.



Why the X Plan Is Important!

Picking up your teenager at a late hour or from somewhere different than they said they'd be, no questions asked, is a challenging idea for many parents. However, the benefits of the X Plan outweigh the downsides. For one, it means that a teenager made the wise decision to leave an unsafe situation rather than giving in to negative **peer pressure**. Having that safe way out can prevent teens from making dangerous and even life-threatening choices.

The statistics show why the X Plan is necessary:

- In the United States, there are more than **4,300 deaths among underage youth** each year as the result of excessive drinking.
- According to the CDC, teens drive drunk **4 million times a month**.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, **teens are responsible for 17% of all fatal alcohol-related car accidents**.
- As far as drugs are concerned, **overall drug consumption among teens is down, but overdoses are at an all-time high**.

With all of that taken into consideration, it's clearly **essential to have a plan in place with teens**, so they can leave any situation without being swayed by the fear of getting in trouble.



How to Use the X Plan to Build Positive Communication

To increase **trust** and **positive communication**, parents can start by not panicking when they receive an X text. No one wants to hear that their teenager has been in a dangerous situation. However, teens who have an overall positive experience with the X Plan will feel more comfortable using it in future should they need to.

If a teen shares with their parent what was happening and why they needed to use the X Plan, parents can thank them for being honest and for doing the right thing. Acceptance, understanding, and **unconditional love** are key to building a parent-child relationship in which a teen knows they will be supported no matter what.

