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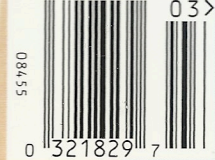
what to do when your parents hate your friends

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# under the influence

**Sometimes your parents don't approve of your friends—be it because of their clothes, their manners, or that time they got you in trouble. Sloane Crosley reports.**

**I** remember the exact moment when my mother decided she didn't approve of my best friend, Victoria.\* It was an afternoon during the summer between seventh and eighth grades, and my mother came home to find us in my parents' bedroom, watching a movie.

Victoria was sprawled out on the mattress, her sock-covered feet resting on my mother's pillow.

"Hi, girls," my mom said. Not turning her attention from the TV, Victoria released one of the fists propping up her chin just long enough to wave, but made no motion to lift her feet. And that was pretty much it.

My mother began subtly encouraging me to hang out with my other friends and increased her questioning about activities with Victoria: Where *exactly* was I going? When *exactly* would I be back? Any bad behavior was clearly an act of hypnosis on dirty-socked Victoria's part. When I got my ears double-pierced or when I threw a party in the house, my mom was sure Victoria had been there. I finally confronted my mother about why she saw sweet Victoria as the root of all evil.

"She has bad manners," my mother said, "and I don't like who you are when you're around her." Victoria was the daughter of two doctors. She would eventually be accepted early to the Ivy League school of her choice. But those details didn't matter. They still don't: If you call my mother now and say the name Victoria, you can almost hear her cringe through the receiver. As unfair as it seemed at the time, it turns out that my situation was far from unusual.

"It's really tough to have your parents single out one specific person as bad for you," says Ana, eighteen, from White Plains, New York. "It dampens every plan you make with that friend, because your parents will say no, or else you'll have to hang out behind their backs."

"I had one or two friends that caused my mom to say, 'You know you don't have to hang out with them if they make you uncomfortable,'" says Laura, nineteen, from Atlanta. "That was her nice way of saying, 'They move a little too fast, and I'm worried you're going to get caught up in it.'" Many teens get a similar "It's not you we don't trust" speech at some point. But why do parents often employ more rigorous standards for their teen's friends than for their own children? "Parents obviously worry about drug and alcohol issues and sexual promiscuity, but also about academic motivation," says Helen Blackburn, a school psychologist at Greenwich High School in Connecticut. "If a student hangs out with friends who cut class, parents worry their child might be at risk to follow along."

Cynthia, 21, from New Canaan, Connecticut, can't argue with that. Her parents often remind her that she *is* the company she keeps. "Whether girls choose to acknowledge it or not, the way your friends act does ultimately affect the way you act," she says. "When your parents begin to question your relationships, in many cases they have a point."

My own mother concurs, using almost cultish language to describe my relationship with Victoria: "She had this hold over you, and I got the feeling that she didn't have very involved parents. *continued* ▶ 167

Opposite page: CATHERINE BALET from Identity (Steidl)

## BASS APPEAL

145: Blazer, about \$1,245 (with pants). dolcegabbana.it. Henley, glemaud.com. T-shirt, Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Jeans, acnestudios.com. Necklace, ladygreyjewelry.com.

## SHOPPING SPREE

153: Bugirl shorts, about \$535. Camilla and Marc jacket, about \$680.

## THE BRIGHT STUFF

158-159: Coat, about \$935. cpcompany.com. American Apparel hoodie, about \$49. americanapparel.net. Bag, about \$580. stephaneverdino.com. Mary Kate Steinmiller bracelet, Charlotte Ronson, NYC. Dekay Ray bracelet, dekaray.com. Headphones, acgears.com. Apple iPod Shuffle, about \$49. apple.com. 160: Adidas Originals jacket, about \$70. Adidas Originals stores. Pollini cardigan, about \$780. pollini.com. Leggings, membersonlystyle.com. Cord bracelet, Fred Segal, Santa Monica, CA. Bead necklaces, e-mail: info@cecileboccaro.com. Sneakers, about \$980. (866) VUITTON. Bag, armanixchange.com. 161: Sonia by Sonia Rykiel sweater, about \$200. saksfifthavenue.com. American Apparel thermal top, about \$34. americanapparel.net. Laptop sleeve, Scoop, NYC. Enameled bangle, about \$1,200. louisvuitton.com. Mary Kate Steinmiller cord and crystal bracelet, about \$60. Charlotte Ronson, NYC. Green braided bracelet, (212) 219-3893. Joyce Leslie bangles with charms, about \$6 for set of three. Joyce Leslie stores. Watch, baby-g.com. Malin Collection nylon cord and nickel bead bracelet, about \$75. malincollection.com. 162: Adam vest, about \$265. (212) 229-2838. T-shirt, Macy's. Jeans, walmart.com. Necklace and bracelets, malincollection.com. Beach ball, y-3.com. 163: T-shirt, about \$995. Moschino, NYC. Leggings, louisvuitton.com. Bangle, (646) 619-6818. Malin Collection cord bracelet, about \$75. malincollection.com. Bag, Scoop, NYC.

Correction: On page 115 of our February 2009 issue, the key chains on the tote are from Kate Spade, about \$45-\$50 each. katespade.com.

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# under the influence

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She struck me as someone with no limits, and that scared us."

It's not uncommon for parents to use your friends' households as litmus tests. "My parents have discouraged me from hanging out with a friend because they don't like her family," acknowledges Simone, eighteen, from New York. "My mother would tell me straight up, 'I don't like her mother.'" With parental concerns ranging from illegal activity to a decline in academic performance, the benefits of having a loyal friend, flaws and all, can become easily obscured. "I changed my behavior when I was around my friend because that's how I wanted to act," Ana reflects. "To them, my friend was the specific person enabling my rebellion—but she was just my friend. I would have taken the same actions with or without her."

"Since your parents can't control the entire world around you, it's not surprising that they occasionally freak out about your friends," notes Sarah Burningham, author of *How to Raise Your Parents* (Chronicle Books). "The best way to deal is to let them into your life a little. A few volunteered details can go a long way. Introducing your friends to your parents could help keep them from worrying," Burningham adds. And if their concern remains after that, well, maybe they've picked up on something that you're missing.

Still, a decade later, I am not willing to go quietly on the Victoria issue. I call my parents and tell them that I have recently learned that Victoria is in India, working with AIDS orphans. "Well," my father says, "how about this? When she wins the Nobel Prize, we'll take it all back." □

\*Name has been changed.

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