

CHOICES

Scenario 9

The Secret Party

You know that your older sister, Celia, is going to stay at her friend Jenny's place on the weekend. Celia and Jenny are both 14. Celia is very excited about it. She is constantly texting Jenny about what they will wear.

You come to ask Celia about some homework. The door of her bedroom is half open. You overhear her talking to Jenny. She has put her phone on speaker.

"Of course they won't be home. I told them it's just going to be you and Suzy and Amy. They made me promise not to invite anyone else."

Jenny laughs.

"But of course I'm going to invite plenty of others. No one will ever know."

You realise that Jenny's parents are going to be away and there's going to be a secret party with all sorts of guests, and no adult supervision. Celia has told your mother that the party will be supervised by Jenny's parents. But Jenny has revealed the truth.

What should you do?

**A You say to yourself, "I shouldn't have been listening. It's not my job to interfere."
You say nothing.**

What next?

Celia goes to the party.

You wait to see what happens.

On the Sunday, Celia is driven back home by Jenny's Dad. She has been crying. You see him come in. He has a look like thunder.

"We need to talk," he says to your parents.

They go off into the lounge and close the door.

Half an hour later, Celia comes out. She sits down on the chair and says, "I didn't mean it to end up like that." Then she rushes upstairs to her bedroom.

Jenny's father goes. Your parents sit you down to explain.

"There was a secret party. And all sorts of people – not very nice people – turned up. Eventually someone called the police."

Your Mom has been watching you.

"You don't seem surprised. Did you know?"

Think about it

There is a reason why in every culture around the world, adults supervise children. There is a law called the 'age of consent', normally about 16 or so. This is the age at which boys and girls are considered to be able to make 'informed choices' about their behavior. Below that age, they are always under the control of adults.

Why? Because until you have many years of life experience, you are vulnerable to all sorts of pressures. It could be alcohol, or smoking, or drugs, or violence – or any number of other dangers. The idea is that adults protect you from those dangers.

To be in a situation where such things are possible – like a secret party with no adult supervision – is to take a massive risk. The consequences could be very serious.

Adult supervision is not a horrible burden, or a sign they don't trust you. It's a way of keeping you safe.

Do you want to look at another scenario involving temptations? (Go to 19)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 9)

B You decide you can't keep quiet about this. You go to your Mom and say "There's something you should know about Jenny's party..."

What next?

Within minutes, Mom is in Celia's room. There is the sound of loud voices.

Soon after, Celia comes running out, crying.

"You little toad! I'll never speak to you again!" she hisses. "I'm leaving home!" And she rushes outside.

Your Mom comes out. She puts her arms around you.

“You did the right thing. Celia’s not old enough to know what the dangers are. She’s angry but it will go away. Thank you.”

Think about it

This situation opens up the problem of what ‘bystanders’ are meant to do.

Let’s go sideways to a situation where you see or hear something that is worrying. Let’s suppose you watch a boy or girl bullying a disabled kid. What do you do? Do you stand and watch – because it’s too risky to get involved? Or do you speak up?

To say that a dangerous situation doesn’t involve you personally is not a good enough answer. As a member of a school, or a family, you have responsibilities. To see someone at risk of being hurt and to do nothing is a form of cowardice.

Celia’s too young to know what could happen – if the wrong people came to the ‘secret party’ – and things got out of hand. Your Mom well and truly understands the danger – and she is saying thank you. Your Mom’s opinion is much more important than Celia’s.

Standing up against a danger is hard, but a good thing to do.

Do you want to look at another scenario involving a secret? (Go to 4)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 9)