

Cultural Daily

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5 Dangers that Teens Face Growing Up in New York City

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One of the things that's so remarkable about America is how diverse it is, not just with the different people who live here and their customs and backgrounds, but also what it's like coming of age in different parts of the country. Someone who grows up in rural Arkansas will have a completely different experience than one who's born and grows up in Chicago or Los Angeles.

Today, we'll talk about growing up in New York City. There's nowhere quite like New York, and if you're lucky enough to live there during the early part of your life, there are some significant benefits, but also some dangers. It is those teen dangers that we'll detail in the following article.

Traffic

There are nearly 8.5 million people living in New York, and many of them drive. Because of this, a teen growing up in the Big Apple needs to watch out for the taxis, Uber vehicles, and civilians on their way to and from work every morning, afternoon, or evening. In many neighborhoods, there's traffic, even in the middle of the night.

There are also plenty of accidents, and New York teens can suffer injuries if they're not careful. In a single month, [distracted driving caused nearly 350 traffic accidents](#) in Manhattan alone with injuries or fatalities, to say nothing of the other boroughs.

New York City teens must learn to watch out for traffic by looking both ways before crossing the street. That's not dissimilar to anywhere else in the country, but there are so many aggressive drivers in New York that this practice is more critical than just about anywhere else. Some New York drivers won't bother slowing down if they see you attempting to cross against the light.

Sex

Teens everywhere talk each other into sexual encounters. New York is not different from other places concerning sexual pressure as well.

However, in a place like New York, there's more than the usual emphasis on being cool and projecting a self-confident aura. The teens there often pressure each other to seem more adult than they are at younger and younger ages.

It's not uncommon for New York teens to be sexually active by 13, 14, or 15 years old. Preaching abstinence is not likely to help, what with their hormones raging. Pornography is also widely

available via the internet now, and these teens are growing up seeing graphic sexual images with just the tap of a smartphone screen.

Parents need to talk to their teens about sexual responsibility and not leave it up to religious leaders or schools. These might seem like embarrassing conversations, but every parent should [talk to their kids about pregnancy](#) and STDs.

Violence

In a big city like this, violent encounters also take place regularly. The New York crime stats are much lower overall than during some of the city's more difficult stretches, such as during parts of the 1970s and 1990s. Still, even though the murder rates are down, and most of the other major crime stats are as well, violent encounters do take place.

The rise in anti-Asian violence is particularly troubling. Recently, an individual brutally pummeled an older Asian woman while yelling slurs at her.

Even though a teen was not the target there, Asian teens need to be very careful right now. The anti-Asian rhetoric because of the coronavirus is at an all-time high. It's best if teens travel in groups to avoid anyone singling them out and attacking them either verbally or physically.

Drugs

Years ago, there was this idea of the drug dealer hanging out behind the schoolyard, offering kids a free joint or pill to try to hook them. This was during the "Just Say No" campaign, one of the hallmarks of Reagan's War on Drugs.

Though that sort of thing probably doesn't happen very much, at least not the way the old TV promos depicted, teen drug use still occurs. Recreational pot is now legal in New York, even though no dispensaries have opened in the state yet. Some teens can also get their hands on [prescription drugs such as opioids and Xanax](#).

Parents need to have the drug talk with their teens in just the same way that they need to have the sex talk. They need to let their kids know that they're not to use drugs or bring them into the home.

A teen might be a straight-A student, but that does not mean that their friends don't influence them. Parents who stay silent about drugs might find that their kids are experimenting with them right under their noses.

Sexual Predators

There are also sexual predators who lurk around schoolyards or who try to talk to underage teens on public transportation. No parent likes to think about these things, but these creeps are out there, and in a city as huge as New York, there are bound to be more than a few of them. They certainly pose a danger.

Teens traveling in groups is a deterrent. Parents should also watch for differences in their teen's behavior. If they seem depressed or anxious, it could be that a teacher or athletic coach is doing something that makes them feel uncomfortable.

A parent can instill the idea of "bad touch" in their kids from a young age. Hopefully, if anything

like that does occur, the young person will feel comfortable enough to tell the parent about it so that parent can take the appropriate action.

All of these dangers exist in other places besides New York City. It's just that in a city this large, bustling with people, teens have to be tough and resilient to grow up safe.

There's nowhere else quite like it, but some might argue that where there are more cultural opportunities, there is also more peril. Whether that's true or not, teens here need to watch out for themselves, just as their parents need to stay vigilant on their behalf.

Photo by Emiliano Bar on Unsplash

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