Mardi Gras with a Middle Schooler

Helpful Hints and Suggestions

Think about parameters and guidelines for parade outings now so that you aren’t facing “on-the-fly” decisions when you’re out in the throngs of revelers with your child.

- Talk with your spouse / co-parent / baby-sitter / any other pertinent adults in your child’s life before discussing guidelines with your child. You want to make sure all of the adults are on the same page first.
- It doesn’t matter what other parents are doing; you must be comfortable with your own guidelines for your child. Some things to consider . . .
  - Will you allow your child to be on his or her own (with a friend – we wouldn’t recommend ever allowing a middle school student to walk alone at Mardi Gras) without you on the parade route?
  - If so, how far away will you allow them to go? Set physical boundaries that are very clear.
  - Are there any places that are off limits while they are out at parades?
  - Are you comfortable with other parents chaperoning / monitoring your child on the parade route? If so, who?
  - What is your definition of “supervised”? Are you comfortable with a friend’s older sibling being in charge, for example?
- Talk to your child about the guidelines you have established for him / her in a calm environment before you set out for the parades.
- Enter all pertinent phone numbers into your child’s phone before leaving for the parades. Be sure they have phone numbers for other safe adults in case they can’t reach you.
- Set a designated meeting place with your child in case you get separated and the cell phones aren’t working.
- Discuss the guidelines you have with other parents who may be monitoring your child during Mardi Gras to ensure that you have the same expectations.
- Consider social media and Mardi Gras . . .
  - Emphasize to your child the importance of not tagging any locations, if they are posting photos anywhere online.
  - Remind your child that they should never post photos or quotes / status updates that would 1) make others feel left out or 2) damage their own reputation.