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A Good Babysitter is Hard to Find

Babysitters are hard to come by these days. In fact, you might have more luck getting a mother to give you her ATM password than sharing the name of her babysitter.

It's a problem Louisa Testa of Montclair, N.J., knows all too well. She has 6-year-old triplets — Francessa, Kenny and Mark — and a 3-year-old son, John. Four children make it hard to find a sitter, but Testa says there is more to the problem than that.

"I believe that young girls today — they're just not really interested in making money 'cause their parents are either giving them money or things are just easy to come by," she said.

Diane Debrovner, senior editor of Parents magazine, says that Testa is on to something with her theory. She said it used to be a rite of passage for teenagers, as well as a great way to make money. But today, teens have more school commitments and they also have other ways to occupy their time, with things such as Facebook.com.

"They're not looking for the cash like they used to be," she told The Early Show co-anchor Harry Smith.

Testa recently found a great babysitter when a clerk in a video store overheard her complaining.

"It was her brother who handed me his cell phone and said, 'This is my sister on the phone and she'll do it, she'll babysit for you,'" she said.

Some parents steal good babysitters, but Testa plans on keeping hers.

"I'm not introducing Michelle to anybody," she said. "No one is going to know about Michelle. I haven't told a soul."

Debrovner has some tips to find a good sitter. First, she said, start with word of mouth.

"Send an e-mail blast to everyone you know and ask if they know," she said. "A lot of times parents are protective over that good baby-sitter. Even your good friends will not share phone numbers so you have to be careful."

If your friends don't want to share, try calling the Red Cross, which Debrovner said offers babysitting, CPR and first aid courses.

"They may not give out the actual names but you could post a notice on the bulletin board outside the classroom," she said.

Parents can also try calling colleges because students are often looking for a way to make extra money.

"You can post a notice there or put an ad in one of their college newspapers. Often you're not ruining their social life," she said. "If they leave their house at 11, (they'll) go out till 1:30."

There is also the fairly new babysitting co-op, which is a group of parents who babysit for each other for free.

"Let's say you have 10 or 30 families in a co-op and you babysit for their family and you get points," she said. "Kids feel like they have a playdate."

Also try Web sites such as sittercity.com, mynannycalledinsick.com, studentsitters.com or craigslist.com.

"You obviously have to do your own background reference check on these sitters," Debrovner said. "We've heard good things from parents who have found nice college and graduate students."