

SUPPORTING YOUR ADOLESCENT IN BUILDING HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS & RELATIONSHIPS



Why Friendships and Relationships Matter

Adolescence is a time when friendships and romantic relationships become central to a teen's identity and emotional well-being. Healthy relationships can provide support, boost self-esteem, and help teens develop crucial social skills. On the other hand, unhealthy relationships can lead to emotional distress, peer pressure, and risky behaviors.

How To Support Your Adolescent

Encourage Open Dialogue

Let your teen know they can come to you with relationship concerns without fear of judgment.

Set Clear Expectations

Talk about what healthy relationships look like and why mutual respect, communication, and trust are essential.

Teach Healthy Boundaries

Help your teen understand the importance of setting limits and respecting others' boundaries in both friendships and romantic relationships.

Model Healthy Relationships

Be a positive example. Show your teen how to handle disagreements respectfully and how to communicate openly with friends and partners.

Address Red Flags Early

If your teen is involved in a relationship or friendship that raises concerns, address the situation early. Encourage them to reflect on their feelings and whether the relationship is making them feel safe and valued.

KEY ELEMENTS OF HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Respect

- Healthy friendships are built on mutual respect. Teens should feel valued for who they are, without fear of judgment or manipulation.
- Encourage your teen to value their own boundaries and to respect the boundaries of others.

Open Communication

- Open, honest conversations are vital. Teens should feel comfortable expressing their feelings, needs, and concerns.
- Encourage active listening—both your teen listening to others and being heard by their peers.

Trust and Loyalty

- Trust is foundational in both friendships and romantic relationships. Healthy relationships involve honesty, dependability, and being there for each other.
- Teach your teen to recognize red flags if trust is repeatedly broken.

Conflict Resolution

- Disagreements are normal in relationships, but learning to resolve them respectfully is key. Encourage your teen to discuss issues calmly, avoid yelling or blaming, and find compromise when possible.
- Teach them that conflicts should not involve physical or emotional harm.

Independence and Healthy Boundaries

- Encourage your teen to maintain their individual interests, friendships, and sense of self, even within relationships. A healthy relationship allows both individuals to grow.
- Help your teen set boundaries that reflect their values and comfort levels, both in romantic and platonic relationships.

SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Manipulation or Control - One person tries to control the other's actions, emotions, or decisions.

Peer Pressure or Risky Behavior - Pressure to engage in behaviors your teen is uncomfortable with, such as drinking, smoking, or skipping school.

Disrespect or Bullying - Name-calling, belittling, and ignoring feelings are signs of toxic relationships.

Constant Drama or Stress - Relationships that leave your teen feeling anxious, stressed, or constantly upset may not be healthy.

Abuse - Any form of abuse, whether verbal, emotional, or physical, is unacceptable. If your teen is experiencing any form of abuse, they should seek support immediately.

RESOURCES! For more information check out:



Books:

Parenting a Teen Girl: A Crash Course on Conflict, Communication, and Connection with Your Teenage Daughter by Lucie Hemmen, Ph.D.

Decoding Boys: New Science Behind the Subtle Art of Raising Sons by Cara Natterson, M.D.

Online Resources:

Children's Health Council



HealthyChildren.org



Center for Parent & Teen
Communication

