

Friends during Early Adolescence¹

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Credits:

If you have a son or daughter between the ages of 10 and 14, you probably have heard, “But Mom, Dad, all my friends do, have, or wear...” something you don’t want them to do, have, or wear.

During the early teen years, the need to fit in with peers is stronger than at any other age. And as friendships become closer, peers have more influence.

Parents may worry that their children’s friends, especially new ones, might be a bad influence or that they’ll fall into the “wrong crowd.” But you can help your young teen develop healthy friendships.

Keep in mind that peer pressure can be positive. Help your child choose friends whose values, activities, and behaviors are consistent with your family’s. Get to know your child’s friends and their parents.

Make sure your child is in a safe environment after school. At some time in the young teen’s schedule, allow some down time “with friends in a safe place with adult supervision” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, p. 39). This helps young teens learn important social skills.

Talk with your young adolescent about making good choices and resisting pressure to disobey rules or values. Teach her or him how to get out of a dangerous or inappropriate situation.

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Show your child what a good friendship is. It may be simply listening to a family member or friend who needs to talk something over. “Children who see their parents treat each other and their friends with kindness and respect” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, p. 41) have a head start on learning how to develop healthy friendships for their early teen years.

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http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/508.mp3

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Reference

U. S. Department of Education. (2005). *Helping your child through early adolescence*. Retrieved February 13, 2007 from <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/adolescence/adolescence.pdf>.