

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Healthy Friendships Tipsheet

Here's a handy summary of the advice you found in the Healthy Friendships quiz.

Get to know as many of your teen's friends as you can.

Knowing his friends will help you tabs on his life and may help keep him out of trouble. If he and his friends hangs out at your house, introduce yourself and ask a question or two. If they don't hang out there, find ways to meet them — offer rides to and from events, have them over for dinner, etc. Stay alert to changes in his social circle, too. (When teens switch, it sometimes means trouble.) And if something doesn't seem right to you, act on it.

If you don't like your teen's friends, figure out why.

Do you suspect they use drug or alcohol use? Do you think they treat your teen badly? Do you have a personality conflict? No matter what the reason is, remember this: If you suspect that a friend is a bad influence, don't wait. Talk to your teen, make your concerns and expectations clear, keep a closer eye on him, and, if necessary, help him connect with a wider circle of kids.

Meet as many of your teen's friends parents as you can.

The parents can tell you a lot about their teen and help you keep close tabs on yours. You might even consider calling or getting together regularly to share information about how your teens behave, what they like to do, and any changes you've noticed lately.

Find out where your teen hangs out most of the time.

Knowing where she is will help you find her if there's an emergency. Plus, knowing the environment she's in will tell you which influences (good and bad) she's around. If you're not crazy about the places she hangs out, help her find one you do like. It could be your house, a friend's house, a clubhouse or after-school program — any place with a trusted adult in charge.

Make sure your teen hangs out where there's adult supervision.

Teens who aren't regularly monitored by their parents are four times more likely to use other drugs than those who are.¹ If possible, encourage your teen and her friends to hang out at your house. (Set aside a comfortable spot for them and keep plenty of snacks on hand.) You'll become more connected to her and more aware of what she's up to. If hanging out at your house isn't an option, find another parent who's able to have them over, or an activity that has adult supervision.

¹ Metzler, Rusby, and Biglan, Community Builders for Success: Monitoring After-School Activities

Understand why your teen chooses certain friends.

You can learn a lot about what makes your teen tick by knowing what she finds attractive in a friend. Is it personality? Social status? Image? Activities? If you don't know, ask her. Promise her you're not prying — you just want to know more about her. And if you feel her relationships aren't healthy or put her at risk for drugs and alcohol, help her branch out and spend time with different kids.

Spend time and energy supporting the healthy friendships.

Supporting friendships means driving your teen and her friends to and from events, letting them hang out at your house, encouraging time together, and so on. There are big benefits to it—you'll show her that you're interested in who she is, and you'll stay better in tune with her life. If you'd like to see her expand her circle, encourage her to get involved in an activity she feels passionate about. Chances are she'll meet a new group of kids in the process.

Do what you can to discourage unhealthy friendships.

Limit his time with those friends: Don't allow sleepovers, don't offer rides, and set firm rules about having friends over when there's no adult home. If you suspect that his friends are using drugs or alcohol, be sure he knows how you feel about using. (Your opinion really does matter, even if he doesn't say so.) Help him get involved in an activity that will expose him to a new circle of potential friends. Spending time with active, healthy teens who aren't using can have an incredibly strong affect on his behavior.