Teens and cliques

Help your teen develop healthy peer relationships

Cliques are part of every teen's life and are usually made up of friends who have similar interests. As teens discover their own identities, it can be comforting to hang around people interested in the same things.

A group of friends who care about each other can provide positive peer pressure against things like drinking or doing drugs. Parents can help teens find the right group to be a part of as well as a healthy balance between friendship and independence.

The teen years are a time when friends can compete with parents in importance and parents become more cut off from their teen's lives. It is only natural that parents become frustrated and fearful of the values peers may hold.

With the right guidance, you child's teen years can be a smooth transition into adulthood with good friends and positive experiences.

What parents can do

- The best way to help your teen make good decisions about friends is to provide plenty of love, support, and encouragement.
- Teens need to have enough self-esteem to form their own opinions and not answer to a group of friends. Standing up for beliefs is an important part of maturity. Teens who feel good about themselves are less likely to cave in to peer pressure.

- Take time to get to know your teen's friends and make an effort to meet their parents. Include friends in family activities. This will give you a chance to become better acquainted with the friends and casually communicate your rules and expectations.
- Determine if your teen's peer group shares the same values as your family and if not, discuss this with your teen.
- Teach your teen that the key to choosing friends is not to become popular, but to find a support system of people who enjoy the same things and contribute positively to your teen's life.
- Don't forbid friendships. It seldom works and instead puts a strain on communication with your teen. Talk to your teen about why a particular friend or group is not healthy. Be specific.
- Encourage your teen to seek healthy friendships outside his or her clique. Remind your teen that truly popular people are those who accept and build friendships with everyone.

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