



ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

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FAST FACTS

ASSET #15: Positive Peer Influence

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when their best friends model responsible behavior.

65%
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Positive peer influence" is one of six boundaries-and-expectations assets.

* Based on Search Institute survey of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

Photos of Friends: Snapshots of Responsibility

The best way to encourage children to choose positive, healthy relationships is to model them ourselves. Take out an old yearbook or photo album. Look at pictures of the friends you had as a teenager.

Think about the friends who acted in ways you admired. Most people can remember at least one person who always sensed when things weren't going well and called, sent a note, or showed up to find out what was wrong. Often, these are the people who turned out to be lifelong friends.

How about people who weren't such true friends? Was there someone who spread rumors about you, or talked behind your back? Did you ever have a friend who tried to get you to do things you didn't want to do? The pain of these kinds of experiences often teaches young people a lot about how they want to be treated by others.

Helpful Hints

Tips that encourage your child to keep responsible friendships:

- **Talk with your child about her or his friends. Ask questions to find out what they're like.**
- **Get to know your child's friends and their families. Point out what you like about them.**
- **Don't jump to conclusions based on what friends look like.**
- **Avoid criticizing friendships that seem negative to you, but be honest when you're concerned about a relationship.**



No one forced you to like people who were good to you, or feel angry at people who hurt you. You had to make your own choices about who your friends were. In the same way, we can't control who our children choose as friends. They are exploring and learning about their world, themselves, and the people around them. Sometimes they're attracted to people we have concerns about. Other times they may say the 'good' kids are boring. However, if we model responsible relationships, talk to our children about how others act, and are involved in their lives, gradually they'll see that friends who act, talk, and think in positive ways will bring out the best in them.

time together

Three ways to help your child choose responsible friends:

1. **Make your child's friends welcome in your home. Invite them over.**
2. **Think about your own friends. Do they model responsible behavior?**
3. **Let your child know when you think he or she has a good friend.**

A Good Friend

Our children may need our guidance in choosing good friends who have a positive influence. Use this checklist with your child to evaluate each friend. Discuss with your child what each word means:

- R**esponsible
- L**oyal
- C**onfidential
- F**air
- T**rustworthy
- C**aring
- S**haring
- E**ncouraging
- R**eliable
- S**ensible
- O**pen-minded

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- *What do you like most about your friends?*
- *How do your friends handle conflict when it arises?*
- *How do you feel when you're with your friends? Do they bring out the best in you? Do you bring out the best in them?*

More Help for Parents

Making and Keeping Friends: Ready-to-Use Lessons, Stories, and Activities for Building Relationships by John J. Schmidt gives young people the skills and knowledge needed to form meaningful, healthy, lasting relationships. (Published by Free Spirit.)

Quick Tip:
Don't judge your child's friends by what they look like.

Worth a Cheer



We often think of "peer pressure" only as a negative influence. But researchers at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research found that in a study of 1,500 adolescents, peer pressure was usually more positive than negative. Friends were more likely to support each other's efforts to do well than to encourage risky behaviors.

FINAL WORD

"When there are friends, there is wealth."—Southwestern Spanish proverb

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by Search Institute, www.search-institute.org; 800-888-7828. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005 by Search Institute. Major support for Search Institute's *Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth* initiative is provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

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