Teen Friendships

“Adolescents need friends, and parents need to encourage these relationships”

Having a supportive group of friends is important for an adolescent. Peer groups help teenagers learn to negotiate relationships and make the journey from childhood, where they are reliant on parents, to adulthood, where they need to stand on their own two feet.

Peers give young people a sense of belonging, and an increased sense of self-confidence. They also provide young people with testing grounds for attitudes and values outside their family at a time when young people are trying to define their identity. Most modern teenagers are incredibly supportive of each other; however, they can be judgemental and the cause of heartache when conflict or alienation occurs.

Resisting peer pressure

Teenagers need to learn to deal with peer pressure. We all experience some degree of pressure to conform to the behaviours and norms of our social groups, yet this pressure is heightened in adolescence, when wanting to fit in and belong is paramount. Ostracism is unthinkable, which makes teenagers susceptible to being overly influenced by their peers, who don’t always make wise choices.

Parents can help young people deal with peer pressure by being open and frank about the subject. Let them know that while much of the influence of their friends is positive, some of it is not in their best interests.

Help young people resist peer pressure by giving them strategies to say no, while saving face. For instance, saying ‘No, not now’ is a simple face-saving strategy that all young people can learn when they are pressured by peers to engage in behaviours that aren’t in their best interests.

Where do parents fit in?

Get to know your children’s friends and take an interest in their lives. Make them welcome in your home. Enquire about their well-being, their learning and their relationships without being too nosy. Provide space and privacy for your teenager and friends in your home. Set some house rules regarding what’s acceptable in your house, but don’t be too heavy-handed as you want your home to be a welcoming place for young people.

Keep some food available and encourage them to make their own snacks and clean up their own mess. Be firm about your views about acceptable videos, alcohol use and sexual activities at home.

Negative Influences

It is common for parents to disapprove of their young person’s choice of friends, because of behaviour, poor reputation or the adverse influence they have on their teenager. Young people take criticism of their friends personally so you need to be careful how you handle these issues. If you have worries about your child’s choice of friends, check that your concerns are real. Try to get to know the friends you’re worried about. Discuss your concerns with your young person, but talk about the behaviours that worry you, rather than the character of their friends. Discuss the immediate and long-term consequences of their behaviours that may concern you. It also helps to promote diversity of friendships as kids do best when they belong to more than one friendship group.

It is important for parents to understand the value of peer groups for young people and also remember that peers can be positive influences.

Published by Michael Grose
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HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN BE BETTER STUDENTS

The students have headed back to school and parents are a vital factor in their children’s educational progress. Here are some ways you help your child do better at school this year.

1. Let your child see you making mistakes.
   Parents are their child’s first teacher and their lifetime teacher. Part of being a teacher is teaching your child how to deal with making mistakes. Let them see that you can make mistakes and deal with it so they will understand it’s not a big deal and they can cope when they trip up.

2. Use e-mail to keep in touch.
   E-mail is a great way to reach your child’s teacher without having to play phone tag. Teachers then have a record of a conversation or can print information out to put in a student’s file as a reminder. If you hear what your children are struggling in, please feel comfortable talking to the teacher about it. We want to know that they need help. Communication needn’t be limited to when there’s a problem.

3. Don’t tell your child that you weren’t good at maths.
   Some parents might feel intimidated by the thought of helping children with their maths homework, especially in the upper grades but maths is here to serve you, not to trip you up.

4. Maths should make life easier, and mastery can start at home with parents showing that they’re not frightened by numbers. One way to make math more accessible is to relate it to daily activities. Capitalise on examples where maths is useful, especially the kinds of calculations adults do daily like measuring ingredients, managing sums of money, working out distances. This way, children see how what they’re learning matters in life.

4. Get organised with a colour-coded system and a checklist.
   Older students are expected to be more independent and manage their assignments themselves, but as they transition from primary school to middle school, they might find it hard to keep track of everything. Try using colour-coordinated folders and notebooks to help children keep their material for different subjects organised. Keep a written checklist by their school bags so they can make sure they have packed everything they need.

5. Check their homework, and then have them explain it to you.
It’s not enough to just get the answers right. To make sure your children aren’t guessing, sometimes ask them to explain what they did and why. This lets you know that the child has completed the task and for the child to actually explain their work helps their learning.

6. Don’t compare your child with others.
Don’t put pressure on children to be just like others. There’s no such thing as the child that’s like every other child. They are all different. They all have strengths and weaknesses, they all have talents and challenges.

7. Help your child make connections to literature.
To help your child get the most out of books, focus on problem-solving, social skills and life experience. Take your child to the zoo (life experience). Teach them to ask an adult for help if they lose something (problem-solving) or to hold the door for others (social skills). With skills like these, children will be able to relate their own life experiences to those of book characters, improving their comprehension. If they don’t have these life experiences, when they are asked to make deeper connections to reading material, it’s hard for them.

8. Middle school and high school are not the time to take a more hands-off approach.
Just because your children are getting older doesn’t mean it’s time to put them on autopilot. This is the point in their lives when they’re trying to sort out who they are. Peer pressure is intense and their connectedness to school can wane. High school students have this air about them that they don’t need their parents anymore, but they really do.

9. Don’t do everything for your child.
Sometimes it’s faster to do things yourself than wait for your children to complete a task. But having everything done for them means they don’t learn to take care of themselves. Empower your children to think for themselves and be more responsible for themselves.

10. Ask about your child’s day.
Stay involved in your child’s education, beyond helping with homework. Even small things, like asking a child what happened at school, can be the difference between a child who unplugs at the end of the day and one who continues thinking about what they learned. Give them the kind of feedback that acknowledges and respects their feelings so they know you are really hearing them.

Acknowledgement: Mari-Jane Williams.
Huonville Lions Junior Football Club
Meet the Coach
Friday 27th February, 2015
Huonville Football Oval
4.30pm
Come along and meet your coach for 2015
Initial training session for age groups U8 and up
Registrations are still open for new and returning members
Help Save the Children create the biggest kids conga line Tassie has ever seen!

➤ WHEN:
Sunday 22nd March, 2015
11am until 2pm
The conga line kicks off at 11am.

➤ WHERE:
Meet at the GASP sign
Opposite the Derwent Entertainment Centre car park.
Stroll, Scoot or Skate along the track to the Montrose Bay Community Reserve (about 1km).

➤ WHAT:
Join in heaps of fun activities, eat and be entertained!
Entertainment includes a jumping castle, face painting, a magician, a local theatre group, sporting activities, a bbq and much more!

➤ WHY:
To support Save the Children’s Tasmanian Programs

For more information contact:
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Gold coin donation would be appreciated.