



NIDA Family Check Up: Know Your Child's Friends

Children and teens tend to be uncertain about themselves and to try to fit in with their peers. When you know your child's friends, you can ensure that your child is being influenced positively. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports, "At times, [children and teens] can feel overwhelmed by a need to please and impress their friends. These feelings can leave children open to peer pressure. Knowing your child's friends and peers helps parents improve communication, reduce conflict, and teach responsibility."

You can help your child and increase your influence:

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S FRIENDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND AT SCHOOL:

- Communicate with friends and their parents whenever possible.
- Go to school – observe school behavior and who your child spends time with.
- Observe behaviors, speech, and attitude, and acknowledge and encourage positive behavior.

STAY INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S ACTIVITIES:

- Help your child understand his/her feelings.

- Discuss your child's new ideas.
- Be responsible for teaching your child sex education and information about alcohol and other drugs.
- Share your value and beliefs – it gives your child a base to work from.

TALK TO YOUR CHILD WHEN A CONCERN COMES UP:

- Spend time with friends you don't know.
- Look for changes in speech and attitude.
- Check for changes in schoolwork.
- Be alert for lying and sneaking around.

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Peer Influences

Peers can influence your children in positive and negative ways. When you know your child's friends, you can help them make wise choices in their friends. Talk about what values you look for in your friends and why those are important. Qualities like honesty, community/school involvement, and respect for others are a good place to start.

TO DECREASE NEGATIVE PEER INFLUENCE, SPEND TIME TOGETHER AND TRY THESE IDEAS:

- Play board games and outdoor games together.
- Read with your child and tell family stories.

- Encourage your child's interests (sports, art, science, music, cooking, etc.).
- Include your child in social and cultural events in the community.
- Include your child's friends in family activities.
- Keep the lines of communication open.
- If your child has a friend you don't approve of, try to get to know the friend and figure out if the friend is harmful or merely different than you expected.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse compiled a booklet of positive parenting techniques that help prevent or reduce drug abuse.

The other techniques were:

- [Encouragement](#)
- [Communication](#)
- [Setting Limits](#)
- [Supervision](#)
- [Negotiation](#)