



What to do When You Don't Like Your Teen's Friends

As a parent, it is important to get to know your teen's friends. Most school groups and clubs have opportunities for parents to volunteer or attend performances and activities. Encourage your child to invite friends over. For younger teens and tweens, run the carpool to school events, the mall, or the movies.

Sometimes teens make friends their parents don't approve of. As a parent, the first thing to determine is why you don't like this friend.

Is your child's friend harmful for him/her?

YES:

If your child is hanging out with teens who are known to be bad news (having discipline problems at school, using or dealing drugs, having legal problems), it is your duty as a parent to step in. Discuss with your teen why you take issue with the friend. Don't lecture your child, but really talk about why your teen likes this person and what your concerns are.

Work with your child to create safe boundaries for this friendship. They may need to be at your home where you can supervise, rather than the other child's. They may need to remain in a public place like the mall where they may be less likely to get in trouble. If the other person is continuing

to get in trouble or cause problems for your teen, you may need to consider wiping your child's phone and changing his or her phone number to make it easier to avoid the other teen.

NO:

On the other hand, if your teen's friends are not actually causing harm, keep an eye on the relationships and continue talking to your child about your family's values. Express interest and curiosity about your child's new friends, rather than being negative. Invite your teen's friends (including the ones you are less comfortable with) into your home while you are there so you can get to know them better.

Make your home a place the teens want to hang out. You can keep snacks on hand, and allow the kids to watch sports or big events on TV, play video games together, or play basketball. Encourage your child to have birthday parties or post-dance celebrations at your house. Pop in and out to offer snacks and keep an eye on the activity without being intrusive.

Get to know the other parents. Join the PTA and cheer along as your child plays sports. Even though they may be old enough to drive themselves, they will still appreciate your support. While you are cheering on your teen, talk with the other parents.

If your teen isn't being harmed by being in the relationship and isn't acting in risky ways, try to see what your child likes in the friends. Hopefully as you get to know the other kids and the parents, you will learn to appreciate what your child likes in his or her new friends. As you get to know your teen's friends, you can continue to encourage your family values.