

NOVEMBER 2015

Qualities of a True Friend

Friends are an important part of life. Adolescence is a time when our children begin to spend more time with their peers. Some are friends they will spend a great deal of time with; others are just acquaintances they know from school, sports or activities. The friends our children choose during this time begin to influence them and the choices they make. It is important for us to guide our children as they develop the skills that will help them choose friends who will influence them to make healthy decisions and to be the person they want to be.

Friendships can be wonderful, fun, stressful and sometimes filled with drama. Think about some friends you've had in your life. What are some qualities they had that were important to you? All friends are important, but TRUE friends are the most valuable. TRUE friends are people in our lives who encourage us, challenge us and care for us. TRUE friends are people who treat us well and are kind to others.

Teaching our children to find true friends is significant, but it is just as important for them BE that kind of friend. It's important to have TRUE friends but it's also important to be a TRUE friend. We need to talk with our children about friendship, but how do we begin to have that conversation?

Start by reviewing these qualities of a TRUE friend with your child. Then check out the Parenting Power Tips for more ideas.

Qualities of a True Friend

- ⇒ is interested in what's good for you
- ⇒ cares about what YOU have to say
- ⇒ encourages you to be yourself
- ⇒ helps you feel better if you make a mistake
- ⇒ doesn't pressure you to do more than you can do
- ⇒ encourages you to find people you trust to help you solve your problems
- ⇒ gives you space and privacy if you want it or need it
- ⇒ lets you have other friends
- ⇒ *identify other important qualities of a TRUE friend*

Parenting Power Tips

- ⇒ Talk with your children about their friends. Don't judge...just discuss. Ask questions like: "What are some qualities you like about Susie?" or "Are there some things that Joey says or does that bother you?" This will help your child begin to think about the personal qualities of their friends. This is the first step in guiding them to choose friends that will provide positive influence. Help your child begin to see their friendships through an objective lens.
- ⇒ Talk about different types of friendships you observe when you are with your child. Use examples you see on TV or movies or read about in books. Are the characters displaying qualities of a true friend? Is this the type of friend you would like to have? Do you have friends who have these qualities? Are YOU that kind of friend?
- ⇒ Get to know your child's friends...and their parents. The more you know about your child's friends, the better able you will be to monitor your child's actions and keep them safe.
- ⇒ Let your child work out conflicts with friends on their own. Conflict resolution is an important skill and children have difficulty developing that skill when we are too quick to solve every problem for them. Let them know you are available to help them develop a strategy to deal with the situation and that you will always keep them safe, but *they* will need to do the work required to resolve the conflict.
- ⇒ Help your child become the kind of friend others want to be around. As a family, practice those qualities of a true friend.
- ⇒ Remember that our children learn about life by observing our actions. As your children observe your interactions with your friends, do they see those qualities of true friendship? Do your friends have those qualities that you would look for in friends your children choose?
- ⇒ Use this month's [PowerTalk for Families](#) to get the conversation started. Allow your child to interview YOU about *your* friends.

November Prevention Principle

Adolescents' decisions are often influenced by their peers. Unhealthy friendships can make them vulnerable to risk-taking and dangerous situations. Teaching our children to recognize the qualities of true friendship can empower them to choose healthier friendships and strengthen those skills that will help them to stay alcohol-free.

