

ideas for parents

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

FAST FACTS

**ASSET #15:
Positive
Peer
Influence**

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

60%

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

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. "Positive peer influence" is one of six boundaries and expectations assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States.

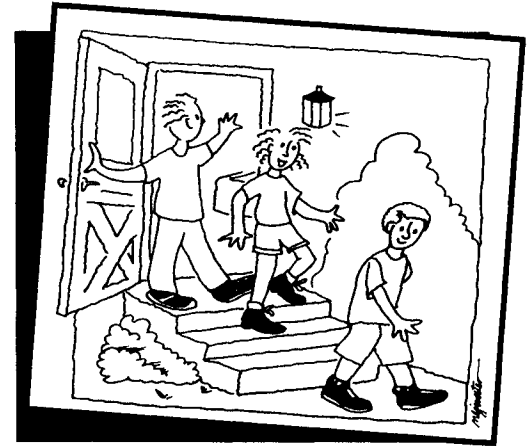
Photos of Friends: Snapshots of Responsibility

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.

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 their world, themselves, and the people around them. Sometimes they're attracted to people we don't approve of (and that, deep inside, they probably don't approve of either). Other times they 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.

Helpful Hints

Tips that encourage your child to choose responsible friendships:

- **Get to know your child's friends and their families. Point out what you like about them.**
- **Get to know the parents of your children's friends. Share your values and rules with them and ask them about theirs.**
- **Don't jump to conclusions based on what friends look like.**
- **Be honest with your child when you're concerned about a relationship.**

time together

Three ways to help your child choose responsible friends:

- 1** *Make sure your kids get to know your friends. The best way to teach is to be a role model.*
- 2** *Include your child's friends in some family activities. Get to know them.*
- 3** *Talk about your childhood friends and why some friendships ended.*

What's Responsible?

Our children may need our guidance in choosing friends who model responsible behavior. Use this "responsible" checklist with your child to evaluate each friend. Discuss with your child what each word means:

- Reliable**
- Equal**
- Self-controlled**
- Principled**
- Open-minded**
- Nurturing**
- Sensible**
- Intuitive**
- Brave**
- Lovable**
- Ethical**

talk together

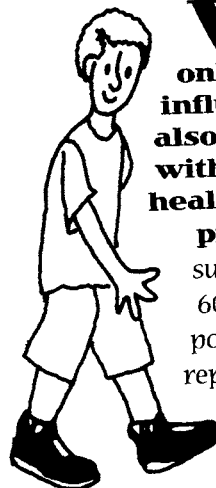
Questions to discuss with your child:

- Which of your friends do you most want to be like? Why?
- What bothers you about your friends? Why?
- How do you feel when you're with your friends? Do they bring out the best in you?

Quick Tip:

Examine your own friendships before you examine your child's.

Worth a Cheer



We often think of "peer pressure" only as a negative influence, but we can also think of time spent with friends who model healthy behavior as peer pressure. Of youth surveyed by Search Institute, 60% say they experience positive peer pressure, reporting that their best friends do well in school, don't use alcohol or other drugs, and don't get in trouble at school.

More Stuff You Can Use

Positive Peer Groups gives information on how to help youth work together to solve their own challenges. (Available from Johnson Institute, 7205 Ohms Lane, Minneapolis, MN 55439-2159; 1-800-231-5165.)

Final Word

"A friend is an extension of yourself, without which you are not complete."—Susan Polis Schutz, poet

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by Search Institute, 700 South Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415; 1-800-888-7828. Copyright © 1997 by Search Institute. Major support for Search Institute's *Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth* initiative is provided by Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal benefit society that specializes in insurance, annuities, and investment products.