

Biblical Example

I want to encourage you this very minute. You are extremely important to your teenager whether they acknowledge it or not. Now, with that being said, you need to know that you are probably being replaced as the “best friend” in their life. Some of you are shaking your heads as you read this, because you have already dealt with this very issue. One of the hardest things to understand as a parent is how very important friends are to your teen, and how not to take it personally when you aren’t the “go to” person anymore.

Talk to your teenager about their friends. Help them determine the qualities of a good friend. And remember, listen to what your teen has to say regarding friendship. They are smart and can be discerning if they aren’t shut down by all of the requirements that you have for prospective friends. You taught them about respect, and trustworthiness, and character. They won’t forget those lessons as they choose their friends.

One of the most beautiful pictures of friendship in the Bible is the relationship between David and Jonathan throughout I Samuel. In chapter 18 it says, “...Jonathan committed himself to David, and loved him as much as he loved himself.” It often seems hard to find that kind of friendship anymore. But it is not impossible!

The greatest lesson to be learned from the friendship of Jonathan and David is not what to look for in a friend, but how to be the kind of friend that honors God. Trustworthy, honest, kindhearted, loyal, and faithful are all wonderful qualities to find in a friend. Our teens need to know those qualities must be fostered in themselves first and then searched for in others.

You get to partner with God to be the shaper of your child’s heart, the molder of their worldview. There are some beautiful examples in the Bible regarding true friendship. There’s David and Jonathan, Saul and Barnabus; even Jesus and his disciples are a picture of what true friendship means. It includes the good, the bad, and everything in between.

Source: ministrytoparents.com

Friends



Losing their Friendship?

Your child that confided in you about everything has found, or is finding, a new confidant. They're called friends. Now I know that some of you are thinking, "But my child tells me everything."

That is a wonderful and beautiful thing, and I hope and pray that you will continue to foster a relationship with your teenager where that can happen. But in order to do that, we have to come to grips with the fact that our teen needs friends their own age. This is a very healthy step in the maturity process for your teenager.

They don't do it to hurt your feelings or make you feel unimportant in any regard. I can remember many nights where my own teenage daughter would be having a conversation on the phone with her friends. It was very animated and very intense and loud. Yet, as soon as I opened the door and walked into the room, all the conversation would cease. She would say, "Do you need something?" Suddenly, I would feel like an awkward 7th grader who didn't know what to say or where to go.

My oversensitive nature as a parent would automatically assume that she was hiding something or saying something that she shouldn't be saying. Because, if not, then surely she would tell me what the conversation was about. We talk about everything, right? It's easy to forget that your role as best friend is slowly changing. Your kids have one mom or dad and many friends. You need, at this point in their life, to be exactly that: their mom or dad. You are a safety net when their friendships are changing.

Embrace a new Role

You are their positive around so much negative. You are their source of unbiased truth amidst so many opinions. The reality is, now you get the privilege of being something much greater than a friend. Their friendships are fleeting. Instead, you get to be their parents.

Action Steps

1. Give them tools to wisely choose their friends. Help them to understand the influence that their friends have on them on a daily basis. Discuss the qualities of a good friend. Show how they have the responsibility to exhibit those same qualities in order to be a good friend.
2. Help them create boundaries with their friends. They should expect respect from their friends, and vice versa. If they aren't being respectful, they shouldn't be friends. Talk to your teenager about physical and verbal abuse. It happens to most teenagers and yours will need to know how to handle it. Allow your teen to set some time boundaries when it comes to spending time with their friends. They're going to want more time with their friends than you think is necessary and it's easier to handle it if all the cards are laid out on the table on the front end.
3. Teach them how to allow a friendship to dissolve. Not all friendships are healthy. We know that. Our teenagers don't always get it until they're knee-deep in an unhealthy friendship. They need to understand that it's okay to step away from a friendship if necessary. Also, your teen needs to know that they are valued even when a friend turns away from them. Some-

times personalities clash, and that's not always conducive to healthy friendships. I call these 'attic friendships' and 'basement friendships'. An attic friendship lifts us up, while a basement friendship pushes us down. Help your teen to clean out the basement of their friendships.

4. Take a step back. You don't want to force them to open up to you. You're expected to be guiding them, not pushing them. Guide them, but let their decision and their choices about their friends be their choice, not yours. Controlling them will only push them in a direction that you're trying to steer them away from. Be ready to lend an ear. Listen without an 'I told you so' on the tip of your tongue. That's not conducive to a close relationship with your teenager. They need to know that they can fail and you will be there to encourage them.

You've spent the last several years getting to know this amazing person. You've poured yourself into them at every turn. You've cried with them when they cried, you laughed with them when they laughed. Now you're expected to be happy about stepping aside and letting someone else share in the life of this person that you would gladly give your life for?

Because you love them, you can do this. If you don't step aside, then you most assuredly will push them away. You will lose and your teenager will lose. Friends are a gift, and sometimes a curse, but always a necessity to enrich and mature our teenagers. Be willing to give them the freedom of friendship.