

## CHILD PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

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### TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

1. First of all, don't criticize the friend. If you criticize, your child is likely to become defensive and shut down.
2. Point out concerns regarding the friend's negative behaviors and ask your child what he or she thinks about that. For instance, you can say, "I'm concerned that Tyler is drinking. What do you think about that?" Then listen to what your child has to say. Knowing what your child thinks about the issue will help you know where to start a discussion.
3. Talk about your values and why you believe in them. Your child may not agree with you, but it will help him or her understand where you stand.
4. Ask your child about the positive qualities he or she sees in the friend and acknowledge them. This is likely to make your child less defensive and lets him/her know that you really are listening.
5. You need to respect your child's rights to make decisions, but you also have to balance that with keeping your child safe. Teens often are motivated much more by pleasure than by possible consequences so they may not see the issue the same way you do. Unless your child's friend is doing something illegal or unsafe, you may not want to forbid contact with that person.
6. Ask your child what he/she wants to do about the relationship.
7. Teach your child to set limits and stick to them. The best way they learn this is by seeing **you** set limits.
8. Talk with your child about scenarios that could arise or have arisen with the friend. By encouraging problem-solving, you are giving your child tools he/she can use to make better decisions. If your child wants to end the relationship, talk about ways he/she can do this.
9. Help your child find activities that interest him/her. If your child does something he/she enjoys and can do reasonably well, it builds confidence and helps them to build relationships with others who share the same interest.
10. If your child won't set limits on the relationship, you may need to do so. These may include no contact with that friend outside of school or other structured activities or only visiting with the friend at your home when you are there. Set limits and consequences for not following the expectations and **stick to them**.