Socialemotional life skills for youth

CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

The best and the most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched, they must be felt with the heart.

- HELEN KELLER

Emotional changes in teen relationships

Teens change both physically and emotionally as they grow and tend to spend more time with peers and less time with parents. Many teens crave acceptance, seek out their own circle of friends, and gravitate toward individuals with similar interests. Childhood friendships may fade as new friendships form.

During this time, adolescents develop more friendships with the opposite sex and show greater interest in romantic relationships. As they include more diverse types of friendships, they may also form fewer close friendships.

Emotional growth and self-esteem, or the belief in one's value, is important to support healthy relationships. Social media may also heavily influence how youth feel about themselves and their lives.

Youth with healthy self-esteem let their strengths shape them, while youth with low self-esteem only recognize their weaknesses and compare themselves to others in a negative way, leaving feelings of not being good enough.

How to help teens understand emotions

Developing self-esteem and understanding complex emotions supports healthy relationship development. Caring adults serving as role models can encourage permanent, positive effects for the future by providing support and encouragement.

Support healthy relationships

- Encourage emotional awareness. Ask teens to identify what emotion they are feeling. Often, providing reassurance that various emotions are "natural" can promote a healthy sense of self.
- Support teens with recognizing emotions in those around them. Discuss how their actions might make someone else feel.
- Recognize how to identify the reactions each of their friends might have to the same situation.

Develop emotional regulation

- Learning emotional regulation is an important skill that helps teens get along better and maintain friendships with their peers.
- Many times teens start to develop their own emotional regulation, which lets them take a step back to think about their own emotions before reacting.
- A more mature approach to being angry might be to consider the circumstances, reasons, or responses that led to a friend's action.

IN THE MOMENT CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

REFLECTION

Sometimes it isn't easy to see the beauty or good things in life. When something so beautiful and good really impacts our lives, it touches our hearts in a meaningful way, making a powerful connection.

Putting it into practice

1	Use movies, books, or other media resources t											
	point out examples of friendships, both good											
	and poor. Remember that nobody is perfect											
	and that relationships require effort and											
	commitment to make them work.											

- Be a role model and surround yourself with healthy, loyal, honest, and considerate friends. Modeling how to interact with others in a healthy manner is a perfect way to guide teens.
- Open your home to your teen's friends. This is a great way to get to know your teen's friends and for you to offer insight into the friendships. Know your boundaries.

In your moment

Think of three role models who demonstrate healthy relationship skills. What traits do they have that you admire?

THREE ADMIRABLE TRAITS

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For additional SEL resources, visit: go.illinois.edu/InTheMoment

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SOURCES

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