

# Strengthen Your Friendships



**C**lose friends sometimes disagree. But by using good communication skills you can help keep friendships strong.

## Disagree carefully

- ▶ Identify what you agree on.
- ▶ Stick to the issue. Stop when the discussion gets too heated.
- ▶ Describe a behavior and say how it affects you. For example:
  - ▶ “It is hard for me to read when you play the music that loud.”
  - ▶ Or, “It is very tempting and frustrating when you offer me RED food.”
- ▶ Avoid general, blaming statements such as, “You never...” or, “You always...”
- ▶ Repeat back what your friend says before making your own point.
- ▶ Apologize right away if you say something hurtful or mean.
- ▶ Don’t discuss important issues in public, while driving in a car, or when you are stressed.
- ▶ Be honest with yourself. Is the issue really worth arguing about? Could you be using it to vent something else you are feeling frustrated or upset about?
- ▶ Remember, it is better to talk about disagreements rather than have them build up.

## Respect limits—yours and hers

- ▶ Set your own limits and stick to them. Is your limit 3 RED foods a day? Don’t eat more just to please a friend. Your health is more important than making others happy.
- ▶ Respect her limits. This will help her respect yours, too.

## Learn to assert yourself

- ▶ Avoid “you” statements. They label and blame the other person. For example, don’t say, “You never want to walk with me.”
- ▶ Assert yourself with “I” statements. They let you stand up for yourself without putting other people down. Just say what you want or feel. For example, try saying:
  - ▶ “I would like you to walk with me.”
  - ▶ Or, “I’m disappointed you don’t want to walk with me.”

### Additional resources

- ▶ Using Social Support: LC 18
- ▶ Use Effective Communication Skills: Magnetic Memo 17

### Suggested activity

Write down five “I” statements you can use to ask others for what you need or want. Share them with your parents and your PAL. Use them when you need to.

### My notes

1 Limit RED foods 2 Increase GREEN activity 3 Hold Family Meetings 4 Keep Track of Weight



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*Especially for the Family Support Person*

## How can I help her learn to get along better with friends?

- ▶ Share your own experiences. What have you learned? What mistakes have you made?
- ▶ Remind her that disagreements are normal. *How* you disagree makes all the difference.
- ▶ Ask if she would like some helpful feedback. If she does, talk to her about what you have observed.
  - ▶ Does she know her limits? Does she respect those of others?
  - ▶ How well does she listen? What could she improve?
- ▶ Offer to role-play with her before she talks to a friend. Especially if she's feeling hurt or angry.
  - ▶ Help her practice saying what she wants and feels using "I" statements—without so much emotion.
  - ▶ Try to help her understand her friend's point of view.

## She does whatever her friend says—even if it's not good for her. What should I do?

- ▶ Talk about her reasons for always going along.
  - ▶ Is she afraid her friend won't like her?
  - ▶ Is she afraid of what her friend will do if she doesn't go along?
  - ▶ Is she afraid that she might lose this friend?
  - ▶ Is it just easier to go along?
  - ▶ Is she unclear about what her personal limits should be? About when it's okay to say, "No"?
- ▶ Remind her that friends don't have to do everything together. Being different makes friendships interesting. It can make them stronger.
- ▶ Encourage her to invite a friend to do some things that are fun and healthy.
- ▶ Teach her to be assertive.

### Additional resources

- ▶ Using Active Listening and Social Support: LC 18
- ▶ Use Effective Communication Skills: Magnetic Memo 17

### Suggested activity

Help her role-play a disagreement that she had with a friend recently. Help her identify what she did well and what she could do differently next time.

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