

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The current focus of your teen's health class is peer relationships. During the teen years, children begin relying more and more on friends to provide advice and validation. As teen reliance shifts from parents to peers, it is important that teens begin to develop a more mature understanding of relationship dynamics. In health class, your son or daughter will learn about different types of friendship, the effects of peer pressure, approaches to resisting peer pressure, healthful and responsible dating behaviors, and the merits of abstinence. All these aspects play an important role in helping teens make healthful choices about sexual activity. The good news: according to data provided by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, teen births are down 22 percent over the last decade.

Some questions your teen will explore in this chapter include: *What are the positive and negative effects of peers and friends on physical, mental/emotional, and social health? What are the dynamics of social groups? What strategies are needed to improve or maintain healthful relationships? How does peer pressure work? What are some refusal strategies that will help reduce the effects of peer pressure? What is the difference between aggressive, assertive, and passive communication? How can dating behavior enhance mutual respect while avoiding unhealthy behaviors? How can limits be set to avoid risk behaviors while dating? What are the risks involved with sexual activity? What are the short-term and long-term benefits of abstinence? What are some strategies that help teens remain abstinent?*

Please reinforce our classroom work by discussing with your son or daughter one or more of the following topics:

- Ask your teen to identify three types of friendships. Ask your son or daughter to name a person with whom he or she maintains each kind of friendship. In turn, share similar information with your teen.
- Discuss with your son or daughter specific instances when peer pressure may be exerted. Talk about ways the pressure may be applied and methods to resist it.
- Discuss with your teen the need to establish limits when dating. Talk about situational strategies that will help avoid risky behaviors.
- Discuss with your teen the moral, legal, physical, and potential life-altering consequences of premarital sexual activity. Ask your son or daughter to explain the benefits of abstinence.

Please plan other activities you think will help your teen develop and maintain positive peer relationships and make healthful choices while dating. Thank you for supporting our classroom work. Feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss your teen's health education.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher