



# Counselors' Corner

October 2014

## Recognizing Unhealthy Friendships

Friendships and social connections are important components of healthy development. However, unhealthy friendships can cause a variety of problems for children and adolescents. Unhealthy friendships can be characterized by manipulation, putdowns, unequal decision-making, and negative emotions. Here are some characteristics of potentially unhealthy friendships.

- Controlling or possessive behavior
- Discouraging friends from having other friends
- Talking behind a friend's back
- Competing with and judging friends
- Giving backhanded compliments
- Embarrassing, blaming, or guilt-tripping friends
- Excluding friends
- Making friends feel badly about themselves
- Pressuring friends to do things they don't want to

## School Counseling Assistance

School counselors help students navigate difficult friendships through individual and group counseling, conflict resolution, parent support, and classroom lessons.

## Does My Child Have an Unhealthy Friendship?

The biggest indicator that your child is in an unhealthy relationship is that he/she feels bad about him/herself when he/she is around the person. Your child might feel sad, angry, guilty, embarrassed, or left out, or he/she might feel obligated to do something he/she doesn't want to do so that the friend won't be angry with him/her.

## Is My Child Being an Unhealthy Friend?

It is important to know if your child is mistreating a friend. Signs that your child is a frenemy include speaking poorly of a friend, excluding a friend from social activities, pushing a friend to do things he doesn't want to do, and feeling jealous when a friend spends time with other kids.

## What Can I Do?

Help your child learn to recognize and deal with unhealthy friendships. Get to know your child's friends and talk about any friendships that seem unhealthy. If a relationship is not worth fixing, encourage your child to make new friends by enrolling him or her in a club, sport or other activity.

You may also want to contact your child's school counselor for assistance.

*Adapted from: "Frenemies: Unhealthy Friendships and What to Do about Them" by Human Relations Media..*

For further details or information contact your child's guidance counselor:

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