



TMS PTA Parent Program

BFF: Best Friends Forever- How to Make Them & How to Keep Them

The nature of friendships change in middle school. Children are making new friendships, separating from their families, and forming their own social universes. There are also power struggles, cliques and mean girls. Learn how to help your child make new friends and maintain old friends, and build resiliency to navigate the new social landscape

As you well know, it's a little tricky with teenagers because they are less appreciative of our direct intervention with them. Instead, you'll need to go in through the back door to help them build the skills they need to sustain relationships. Try the strategies below to build important social skills:

Use active listening responses when you talk with your child. Make sure when your child speaks to you that you respond with statements and questions that show interest. Your child will learn from you through this method.

Practice role-playing with your teenager. Teens love playing the role of somebody else.

Children with healthy social behaviors tend to have a solid understanding of their own feelings. Introduce and reinforce new feeling words frequently. For example, use feelings like "irritable", "disappointed", "frustrated" rather than simply "mad" or "angry".

When watching television together or a movie together, discuss what the characters are feeling, their underlying motivations, and the body language they use to demonstrate their emotions. This helps your teen read others more accurately.

Help your child develop an accurate perception of them self. Children who are aware of both their strengths and their challenges are more likely to be resilient and develop an optimistic outlook.

Share a personal story of your own that might resonate with your child. This helps your teen feel that you understand without putting him/her on the spot to "open up".

Middle school years can be challenging for both you and your child. Please know that there is help out there if you need additional support or guidance. Feel free to contact us at In Step. If we can't help you, I'm confident we know a professional in the area who can. Cathi Cohen at 703-876-8480 or instep_pc@yahoo.com and for more information www.insteppc.com