

*Helping
you to help
your child*

Navigating Frenemies & Cliques with Your Teen

Simple, actionable ideas for parents, carers
and other supporting adults



Friendship
issues are a
big deal for
our teens

Introduction

In this guide, I've shared five ideas to help you to help your teen when it comes to friendship issues.

These issues can feel big and all-encompassing to our teens and navigating them can be tricky for us as the stakes can feel pretty high, and it can feel like ever-shifting sands with today's best friend being tomorrow's enemy!

I hope the ideas in here will help you find some healthy ways forwards with your teen; this is really tricky so don't expect to get it right straight away or every time.

Good luck!

Pooky x

Teen Friendship Issues

Five questions to help you to help your teen. Work through these questions on your own, with a co-parent or trusted friend or with your child at a time of calm. Read on for an explanation of each...

1 *How can you let your teen know that you're listening to them with your whole self?*



2 *Do you role model kindness and compassion in your friendships?*

3 *What questions might help your teen to consider how they'd like things to be?*



4 *How can you help your teen see different viewpoints without them seeing you as disloyal?*

5 *How can you communicate with your teen if they're not open to talking?*



Let them talk

Your most important job when your teen is facing any kind of friendship issues, is to listen. They don't necessarily expect you to solve the problem, but they often appreciate a safe space in which they can air their problems.



- » Listen to understand rather than respond
- » Roll with the silence
- » Ask open questions - be curious
- » Give them time and space to find the right words
- » They may need to pick over the same ground a few times to make sense of it
- » Don't feel that you have to fix things or provide advice; only offer it if asked

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Never put their friends down

One of the most predictable things about teenage friendships is their unpredictability. An enemy one moment is a BFF the next, so be careful about ever putting down any of your children's friends. Harsh words are easily said but not easily forgotten and you don't want to end up on the wrong side of things if allegiances change.

- » Even if your teen is putting a friend down, they'll often respond badly to you doing the same
- » Teens will often take any kind of put-down about a friend very personally, caution is needed!
- » Try to role model kindness and compassion in discussing your friends and theirs

Find out what they hope will happen next



If your teen opens up to you about friendship issues, a great question to ask is 'what do you hope will happen next?'. The answer is sometimes surprising and sometimes they don't have one at all, but by exploring with them how they hope that things will change then we can help them to consider how to make that change happen.

- » It is very difficult to work towards an undefined goal
- » Once we know what we want, we can start to wonder how to get it
- » You can follow up by asking things like, 'what would take you a little closer to that?'
- » Breaking things down into tiny steps can make it feel more doable
- » If they don't know what they want to happen, explore what they want not to happen...



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Look inwards as well as outwards

Sometimes the problem is the situation in which we find ourselves and there are steps we can take to change that. Other times it's more about how we feel about things, and the thing that needs to change is how we feel about and respond to what is happening rather than actually changing the situation itself. And sometimes... we are part of the problem..

- » Wonder aloud about whether it's the situation or their feelings that need to change
- » Encourage your teen to explore whether they are doing anything to exacerbate things
- » Explore what can be changed, what can't be changed and how to tolerate the unchangeable
- » Step into the shoes of others and look at things from their point of view
- » Make sure your teen knows that you're on their team, you're just being curious

Check in often without judgement or expectation



Take a moment to check in with your teen regularly and find out how things are going. Continually remind and reassure them that they can talk to you about anything they need to and that you'll always be supportive and you'll never judge.

- » Make time to check in regularly, give your teen your whole self for a few minutes
- » Sometimes they'll have nothing they want to share and that's fine!
- » Remind them of your unconditional care and support
- » Keep the door open even if they push you away; the occasional text is like a trail of breadcrumbs

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- Thank You! -

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