

HIGH SCHOOL HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS



CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR SGLs

Every student needs tribes over time to give them belonging. And your small group is a great place for that kind of connection to take place! As a small group leader, you're a significant member of a student's tribe. But in the high school years, your influence is limited. At this time in a student's life, a new group dominates their tribe: *friends*

High school ushers students into a phase of increased independence. Whom they choose to spend time with is no longer dominated by their parents' choices, but their own. And the people they decide to put their trust in can drastically change the trajectory of a high schooler's life. While it may be easy as small group leaders to see the likely outcome of some relationships, that's not always the case for high schoolers that are still developing their abilities of logic and reason. Gentle encouragement, calm responses, and a listening ear are the best tools in approaching the sometimes sensitive topic of healthy and unhealthy friendships.

In your group, how you talk about friends matters—especially during high school, the phase when friendships often matter more to students than family relationships. Your words could serve as a catalyst of positive change in how a student views and forms their own friendships.

The idea isn't to make a judgment on the friends your student is hanging out with but to find a place that's healthiest for them in their life.

Here are a few ideas of what to say—and what to avoid saying—when leading discussions about healthy friendships with high schoolers:

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Here are a few ideas of what to say—and what to avoid saying—when leading discussions about healthy friendships with high schoolers:

WHAT TO SAY:

- “What’s the most important quality of a solid friendship?”
- “How does social media affect friendships?”
- “How have your friendships affected your reputation?”
- “Have you ever had to confront a friend? Was there something you could’ve done differently?”
- “Are there any adults you know of whose friendship you admire? What about that relationship is appealing to you?”
- “Your friendships will change over the next couple years, and that’s okay.”
- “When it comes to your friends, do you make wise decisions and do you have their best interests in my mind?”
- “Who are the people that make you like yourself more after you’re around them? Do you have friends that make you like yourself less?”
- “Your friends determine your direction. If that’s true, where do you think you’ll be in the future?”

WHAT **NOT** TO SAY:

- “Don’t be friends with _____. They’re not a good influence.”
- “You’re going to college soon so your current friendships don’t really matter.”
- “Things are so different now than they were when I was growing up. I’m so glad I’m not a teenager.”
- “I’ve heard bad things about _____. Maybe you should think twice before hanging out with them.”
- “How many times have I told you that _____ is not a good friend?”
- “You shouldn’t be friends with someone who doesn’t believe the same things you do.”

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