Healthy Friendships

Friendships are an important part of your life. They can provide enjoyment and comfort. It is important, though, to understand that quality counts more than quantity and that sometimes friendships can become unhealthy. The following information will help you understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy friendships and what to do if you think you are in an unhealthy friendship.

**Signs of healthy and unhealthy friendships**

What makes a friendship healthy?

* You and your friend talk to and listen to one another. You feel comfortable sharing your feelings without being judged.
* You and your friend respect and trust each other. If you tell your friend something, it is kept confidential and they respect this trust.
* You feel good about yourself when you are with your friend
* You feel safe around your friend. You can be yourself around them and they make you better.
* They want to spend time with you and you with them

**What makes a friendship unhealthy?**

* The person hurts your feelings or makes you feel angry or upset
* Your friendship depends on that person and what they think about you, such their approval or acceptance of the things you do.
* You are uncomfortable with what they say or do, or you worry they will not keep your secrets safe
* You act differently around them because you want them to like you or you want to fit in
* You only do the things that person wants you to do. Your friend makes all of the decisions about what you or your group does, wears, says, etc.
* You friend is consistently negative. They may point out what is wrong with you or the choices you make. They may consistently make you feel bad about yourself.
* No is never an acceptable answer. They know what they need from you and they expect it…and they get mad if you don’t come through.

* They are always a victim. Everything you do in the friendship or anything that goes wrong is your fault. They never admit when they are wrong and do not take responsibility for their actions.
* They like to be involved in drama or create drama. They involve you as well even if you do not want to be involved.
* They are not very interested in anything that has to do with you. They are self-involved and do not ask you questions about yourself.

**Why do we stay in unhealthy friendships?**

* You want to help that person.
* You want to feel needed. Having friends makes us feel valued and it’s always good to feel like someone needs us.
* You are afraid to not have any friends or to be alone
* What if I move on from this friendship and regret it? What if you need them for something in the future?
* It can be hard to even imagine “breaking up” with a friend even when the relationship is unhealthy.

**So, what should you do?**

Ask yourself:

* Do you feel worse after you see or talk to that person?
* Do they constantly put you or others down?
* Can you express your authentic self to them?
* Do you feel stressed out around them?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your friendship needs some evaluating. Unhealthy friendships will not get better on their own! It is important you recognize when you are in an unhealthy friendship and that you have a choice.

1. Be honest with your friend or friends. Tell your friends what you are feeling and what you need or want. Your friend may see things differently than you and may not realize they are hurting you.
2. If the friendship doesn’t change, don’t end the friendship right away. This will probably cause a fight or them to bully you. It’s okay to let go. It won’t happen overnight. Often you will have to see this person on a daily basis at school. If you decide you want to end the friendship, use our How to End an Unhealthy Friendship tip sheet.
3. Don’t try to fix your friend.
4. Stick up for yourself
5. Start setting boundaries. If they invite you over, say you have other plans. Start spending less time with them. Start doing things that make you happy.
6. Stay open to new friendships!