

Adolescent Gripe

"Why can't you be nice to my friends?"

Reason for the Gripe

During the middle school years, friendships are extremely important. In fact, it may seem that friends are more important than parents. Your child may feel that her friends will judge her on how you treat them.

How You Can Cope

Open your house to your child's friends. Make them welcome. Provide snacks. Know what's going on, but don't try to be one of the gang. When opportunities arise, ask them about school, their activities and their families. Research shows that this goes a long way in helping your child resist peer pressure to smoke, drink alcohol, or take drugs.

If you feel one of your child's friends (or her group of friends) is a bad influence, talk with your child. Instead of saying, "I don't like Jessica," say, "Jessica uses language that we don't allow in our family. She is often disrespectful to me when she is here. I am glad to welcome her to our home, but I expect her to abide by the house rules." Limit your child's contact with friends who have a negative influence. Provide ways for her to make friends who share your values: scouts, sports, or volunteer activities.



Adolescent Gripe

"Why can't you and the other adults in my life just love me and offer me guidance when I want it?"

Reason for the Gripe

Your child may experience rejection and failure in middle school. Sometimes he may feel like a loser. He doesn't want a lecture. He doesn't want to be nagged. He just wants someone to say, "I love you."

How You Can Cope

Middle schoolers need constant affirmation. They need the security of parents who say—and show—their love every day. And while they need guidance, they don't need parents who try to solve every problem. This communicates that the parents don't trust the child.

Watch for opportunities to have quiet talks with your child—in the car as you drive to team practice, at bedtime, on a walk, or during a special one-on-one meal out together. Allow your child to open up to you without offering a suggestion or solution for every concern. Share your memories of middle school. Say, "Sometimes it was hard for me, too. I know you are trying to work this out. If you need my help, remember, I'm always available."

