

Exploring Friendships and Their Emotional Impact

Introduction

Friendships can play an important role in our lives, impacting our emotional state both positively and negatively. The cards and the track can be used alongside this worksheet. The Polyvagal Teen® worksheet will help you explore the relationships in your life, identify any areas of concern, and manage any possible negative impacts.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- How does spending time with my friends make me feel?
- Do I feel better or worse after being around them?
- Are my thoughts about them reflected in my behaviours around them?
- Are my friendships based around shared values?
- Does this person show genuine respect for my opinions and feelings?
- Is this person a good listener?
- Do they understand where I'm coming from?
- Do we often find ourselves competing with each other instead of encouraging each other?
- Are there any times when I feel like this person is trying to manipulate me or getting something out of us?
- Do they provide the support and encouragement that I need when things aren't going well or when I'm feeling down?
- Am I comfortable enough with them to open up about my feelings without fear of judgement or criticism?

Reflection: What's Next?

Think about how you answered the questions above and assess what type of relationship you have with your friends. If it's more likely that some friendships are not helpful or beneficial for your emotional wellbeing, decide what steps you need to take to protect yourself from their influence and behaviors that might be toxic or unhelpful for your growth. On the other hand some friendships you may realise are more supportive than you may have initially thought.

10 Tips for Teens Managing Friendships That Cause Concern

These are tips that may be helpful .. you might relate to one or two .. or the whole list. There is no right or wrong answer ... just take what you need.

1. Recognise the warning signs of a potentially toxic relationship and be mindful of how it affects your emotional wellbeing.
2. Reach out to someone you trust and talk about how you feel.
3. Set boundaries with difficult friends and let them know what behaviour is unacceptable.
4. Spend time with friends or family who make you feel good about yourself instead of those who bring you down or cause concern.
5. Take breaks from worrying about friendships that cause concern by engaging in activities like reading, writing, listening to music or spending time outdoors.
6. Make yourself a priority and don't worry about pleasing others if it compromises your values or beliefs.
7. Do not compromise your safety for the sake of keeping a friendship intact - it isn't worth risking your mental, emotional or physical health over someone else's decisions or actions.
8. Get involved in activities that can help foster positive relationships such as joining clubs, teams, or attending community events where you can connect with people who share similar interests and values as you do.
9. Seek professional help if needed - talking to an unbiased person who isn't emotionally attached to the friendship might help gain clarity on what steps to take next to protect your wellbeing from any potential harm caused by the person causing concern in your life.
10. Reflect on any lessons learnt from dealing with these experiences, no matter how big or small – these little moments are often invaluable in helping us grow into healthier versions of ourselves each day!