



## Teaching Your Children Lessons on Relationships

In 1975, a Grammy Award nominated song by War, received much airplay on the radio. It asked the following question in melody and its title "Why Can't We be Friends". This is a simple but yet important question. Relationships determine so much of the success or failure most of us experience in life. Such phrases as "it's not what you know but who you know" and "birds of a feather flock together" ring true in reality. One comedian said "I love my family but can't stand my relatives". The world of relationships is very difficult to navigate. Parents can do well by providing their children with important relationship lessons.

As children grow up and move further away from the apron strings, the influence of their peers play an ever-increasing role in their life. It is extremely critical that your children associate with peers who will have a positive influence on them. As parents, you must teach your children how to select relationships. Here are a few tips:

**Be a role-model.** Teach lessons on true friendship through action. Let your children see you and your friends have serious discussions, eat meals, work on projects, and have fun together. Do not let court-oriented TV programs and the suite of negative talk shows be their reference point for making relationship decisions.

**Teach your children that being a good person is not a boring and lonely life.** Having fun and "doing right" can co-exist. We live in a culture that often communicates a message that bad boys and bad girls have all of the fun. Unfortunately, many children seek the company of those who participate in self-destructive lifestyles. However, you want your children to understand that genuine fun is neither destructive to self or others. Real fun endures and brings about long-lasting emotional happiness. Similarly, you must teach your children that actions have real consequences. For example, your behavior will determine whether you can go to college or merely wear a college t-shirt in the future.

**Let your children know that you always have their best interest.** As children age, the parent child-conflict will sometimes increase. They are evolving into a stage where they are asserting their independent will and grappling with their identity. It is critical that your children know that you love them and will always be there for them. No matter who enters into their life, they must understand this truth. When children understand this truth, they are less likely to fall prey to the destructive voices of their culture.

**Teach Your Children to choose self-respect over popularity.** In our current "reality TV" culture everyone wants to be popular. For many, it doesn't matter how you get there.

If one can not be famous then being infamous is a sought-after path. Your children must learn to give priority to their "self-opinion" and those who really care about them over the fleeting views of peers. Take time to talk with your children about popularity and self-respect. Share experiences from your youth in regards to your smart and unwise attempts to be popular. More importantly, share the lessons you learned. Let them know that self-respect can sometimes be a lonely path but always prevails in the end.

**Encourage your children to select friends who are loyal and really care about them.**

This is particularly true for the teenage years. It is a very lucky person who has a friend who cares for him more than he cares for himself. One true role of a friend is to protect you from you. A real friend will intervene when you are contemplating a destructive course of action. Let your children know that these friends are out there if they will only wait and chose wisely. However, there is another prerequisite. As the scriptures say, "He who wants a friend must first show himself friendly".

Friendships are a tough sea to navigate. As parents, we so much want to protect and keep our children near the safe shore of home and family. However, our children will continue to grow away from us and develop other relationships. Hence, our best strategy is to give them the wisdom to choose wisely. And the rest is up to them.

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