

5 Fast Facts

About Peer Relationships and Friendships During Adolescence

Friendships gain new importance and intensity as we become adolescents. Healthy friendships can lead to [higher academic achievement, less risky behavior, and greater overall wellbeing](#) and can influence our future values and identity. They can even have [positive effects on mental health](#) well into adulthood. Providing opportunities for young people to form and maintain healthy friendships and providing [support during turbulent friendships or after friend breakups](#) should be seen as a priority for programs and caring adults.

FOLLOWING ARE 5 RESEARCH-BASED FACTS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY PEER RELATIONSHIPS DURING ADOLESCENCE:

- 1 Healthy peer relationships during adolescence can predict [future mental wellbeing](#).**

Research suggests that close friendships made during middle adolescence predicted relative increases in self-worth, and decreases in anxiety and depressive symptoms in adulthood.
- 2 Positive peer relationships can [protect against the effects of adverse experiences](#).**

Some research suggests that having [strong supportive friends as an LGBTQ+ youth increases positive identity development](#) and [protects against depression](#). Additionally, several studies have shown that positive peer relationships can serve as [protective factors for children at risk due to family adversity](#).
- 3 Forming friendships is a necessary developmental task of adolescence that helps young people gain the skills necessary to form successful relationships later in life.**

Young people who forge healthy friendships during adolescence can learn critical social skills they'll need to navigate future complex relationships, including with employers and romantic partners. Having strong friendships during adolescence can predict [successful romantic relationships in adulthood](#).
- 4 Peer relationships can feel particularly intense and powerful during adolescence due to our increased [sensitivity to social reward](#) and [need to matter to others](#).**

While this increased intensity and sensitivity to social feedback can lead to deep connections, it can also make the pain of being excluded or rejected feel particularly acute. Young people who have been socially excluded or isolated [report greater distress and show greater activity compared to adults in a brain region associated with higher levels of depression](#). This suggests that young people need support and scaffolding to navigate and manage the strong emotions felt during and after friendships.
- 5 Adults can help young people build and learn from friendships by supporting these connections and [helping them through turbulent friendships or after friend breakups](#).**

Adults should recognize the importance of these connections, help young people prioritize time to connect with their peers, and reflect on their own close friendships and encourage young people to do the same. They can also [listen and validate intense emotions when friendships end](#).