



BULLETIN

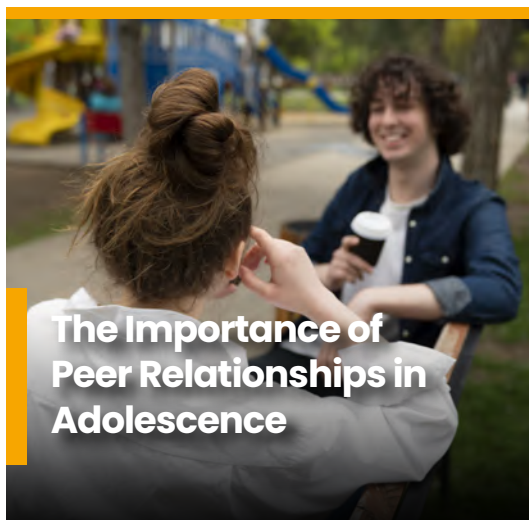
 ISTEK SCHOOLS

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Hello,

Adolescence is a period in which identity development accelerates and peer relationships become central. During this time, a young person's circle of friends significantly influences their self-esteem and social skills. Excessive parental control may hinder autonomy, while complete indifference can make it difficult to notice risky behaviors. Healthy communication within the family directly shapes an adolescent's behavior and friendships. In this bulletin, we aim to share ways to follow your child's development during adolescence and communicate with them more effectively.

Happy reading!





ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIPS AND CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Challenging Behaviors

Learning, growing, and developing always involve making mistakes, learning from them, and taking responsibility for one's actions.

From a neuropsychological perspective, in the adolescent brain, the reward and emotional arousal systems (the limbic system) mature quickly, while the prefrontal cortex — responsible for self-control and decision-making — is not yet fully developed. This developmental imbalance both increases the tendency toward risky behaviors and makes anger management and impulse control more difficult. Therefore, some young people may display more challenging behaviors.

In recent years, some challenging behaviors have emerged as bullying; however, it is important to remember that not every negative behavior is bullying. According to the scientific definition, bullying is an intentional, repeated, and harmful behavior that involves a power imbalance (for example, when a large group targets one individual).

Examples of bullying behaviors that require parental intervention:

- Continuously giving a peer a mocking nickname, excluding, or belittling them.
- Sharing humiliating content on social media.
- Repeatedly excluding someone from a friend group or spreading rumors.

Examples of acceptable behaviors:

- A one-time argument or disagreement.
- Differences of opinion or conflict.
- Mutual joking (if both sides are comfortable and the context is appropriate).
- Choosing to end a friendship.
- Knowing this distinction is very important because labeling every negative interaction as bullying can weaken a young person's conflict resolution skills.

Communication in the Digital World

As technology has become central to our lives, the forms of bullying have changed as well. Today, cyberbullying is among the most common types of bullying among young people.

Research conducted in Türkiye shows that family communication and peer relationships have a significant effect on both cyber victimization and cyberbullying. Furthermore, the Ministry of Family

and Social Services' Guide for Protection from Cybercrime and Cyberbullying provides detailed explanations on safe online behavior and the family's role.

- Examples of cyberbullying include:
- Exclusion or humiliation in group chats.
- Sharing photos or videos without permission.
- Posting insulting comments.
- Creating fake accounts.

Rather than banning social media use altogether, it is more effective to discuss digital ethics. Asking questions like, "Before sharing this, how would you feel if someone posted something unpleasant about you?" helps strengthen empathy.

Balance and Awareness in Parent-Adolescent Communication

The goal in communicating with adolescents should be to guide, not control. Excessive questioning or criticism may cause them to withdraw, while too much freedom can create confusion and insecurity. Parental intervention should be direct only when there is a clear risk of harm or abuse; otherwise, communication should be respectful, guiding, and based on active listening.

Tips for effective communication:

- Make time for daily communication, even briefly. Ask not only about their successes but also their feelings – this helps strengthen your bond.
- Arguments during moments of anger create distance, not solutions. Empathy-based approaches help maintain connection.
- Build empathy: saying "I went through similar things at your age" can create a bridge – and remind you of your own adolescence.
- When setting boundaries, focus on the behavior, not the child's character. Instead of saying "You're a liar," say "I would have preferred you to be honest in this situation."
- When monitoring their social media use, prefer open conversations over secret supervision. This approach fosters trust and encourages responsibility.

The Family's Role

The family is a child's first social learning environment. The communication style observed at home forms the foundation of their behavior in school and among friends. Studies show that young people who experience empathetic communication, emotional support, and consistent boundaries at home are less likely to engage in bullying.

As a family, you can:

- Create a non-judgmental space to talk about feelings. Instead of saying, "You lied," try, "Was something bothering you?"



- Discuss scenes of bullying in TV shows or on social media together. Ask, "Do you think that was the right behavior?"
- Encourage your child to share if they witness bullying; teach that remaining silent may be seen as approval.
- Collaborate with the school administration and guidance counselors when necessary.

The most effective way to prevent challenging behaviors is to strengthen the culture of communication and empathy within the family. When adolescents feel heard and understood, they are less likely to harm others or stay silent when witnessing harm.

"A child's inner voice is first shaped by the voice of their family."

Let's shape that voice with understanding, patience, and trust – so that our children grow into strong individuals who do not hurt others.

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