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Your Teenager and Friends

Read this page to find out how important having deaf friends is for your teen. Learn how you can help your teenager find other teens with hearing loss.

Deaf teens need friends like them.

Making friends is important for all teenagers. But it may be hard for your teenager to meet other deaf teens because there aren't as many deaf teenagers as hearing teens.

Having deaf friends can help your teen feel not so alone.

If you live in an area with no other deaf people, your teenager may feel like the only deaf teenager in the whole world. Knowing other people with hearing loss can help your teen feel not as lonely.



To your teen, having deaf friends means knowing someone else who is going through the same things.

You may say, "But she had so many hearing friends when she was little!"

Parents often want to know how to help their teenager have more hearing friends. Maybe you remember your teen having lots of hearing friends when she was younger. But making friends is different when you're a teenager than when you're a child. Why?

- Children get along with others mostly by playing.
- Playing is mostly physical, or having to do with the body.
- Playing is mostly about doing something. Like playing basketball, or playing with dolls, or making arts and crafts.

But when you become a teenager, everything changes:

- Getting along with others is talk, talk, talk.
- Maybe your teenager can read lips or hear enough to talk to hearing teens a little. But teenagers need to be able to communicate easily to have close friendships.
- Teenagers with hearing loss have trouble following what people say in big groups.

So don't push your child to have hearing friends. Instead, help your child find deaf teens who know what she's going through.

Help your child meet other teenagers with hearing loss.

If there are other students with hearing loss at your teenager's school

- **Ask your child to join your school's club for deaf teens.**
Many high schools with deaf students have a Junior National Association of the Deaf (Jr. NAD).
- **Ask your school to set up a group for deaf students to talk to each other.**
 - Ask your school to find someone trained to work with the deaf to lead the group.
 - The group could get together once a week, or once a month.
 - In the group, students can talk about things that they're going through. They can give and get help and ideas from the other students.
- **At your teenager's IEP meeting, ask your child's school to put your child in classes with other students with hearing loss as much as they can.**
 - At your teen's IEP meeting, ask that she be able to go to meetings for deaf students. Sometimes the meetings may be at the same time as classes.
 - At your teen's IEP meeting, write a plan for how your child can make up class. You may have to ask for:
 - A note taker to take notes during class for her
 - Extra help from the teacher to go over what she missed
 - Ask your child's school to put your child with other deaf student whenever they can. The students could be put together for:
 - Gym
 - Art class
 - Lunch

If there are no other students with hearing loss in your teenager's school

- **Ask someone who works with your child to help you find other deaf teens in your area.**
 - This person could be a social worker, or a teacher of the deaf.
- **If you find that a lot of teenagers with hearing loss live in the same area, visit their schools with your child.**
 - Meet the other deaf students. Ask them to e-mail each other.
- **Contact a high school with a good program for students with hearing loss.**
 - Ask the person in charge how your child can meet the deaf students of the same age in their program.
- **Spend a day with your teenager at a program for students with hearing loss.**
 - Ask the school if they can set up a time where your child could meet with their deaf students. Your teenager could come away with a new friend!
- **Get in touch with national groups for the deaf.**
Many of these groups have special events for teens at their yearly meetings.

Here are a few groups:

- The [Junior National Association for the Deaf \(NAD\)](http://www.nad.org/jrnad/) (<http://www.nad.org/jrnad/>)
- [AG Bell's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Section](http://www.agbell.org/sections/dhhs/dhhs.html) (<http://www.agbell.org/sections/dhhs/dhhs.html>)
- The [American Society for Deaf Children](http://www.deafchildren.org) (<http://www.deafchildren.org>). This group is mainly for parents. But you may be able to find other parents with deaf teenagers through their [listserv](http://listserv.kent.edu/archives/parentdeaf-hh.html) (<http://listserv.kent.edu/archives/parentdeaf-hh.html>).
- For a longer list of groups for the deaf, go to our [Organizations](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/resources/index.jsp?section=1) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/resources/index.jsp?section=1>) page.
- **Send your child to summer programs for teens with hearing loss.**
 - Check out [Explore Your Future](http://www.ntid.rit.edu/prospective/eyf.php) (<http://www.ntid.rit.edu/prospective/eyf.php>). Explore Your Future is a summer program for deaf and hard of hearing students going into their senior years. The program lasts 1 week. Students get to see what it's like to live at college. They learn about different kinds of jobs. And they learn how to make better decisions about their lives.
 - Go to this page on Gallaudet University's [Young Scholar's Program](http://clast.gallaudet.edu/summer/YSP/index.html) (<http://clast.gallaudet.edu/summer/YSP/index.html>). The Young Scholar's Program has several different summer programs for deaf and hard of hearing teens.
 - Check out state-by-state [list of summer camps](http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/142.html) (<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/142.html>).

Help your teen feel good around all kinds of people

Your teen will need to make hearing friend, too. Especially if he's the only deaf student in his school. Ask your teen to try some of these things to make friends, deaf or hearing:

- Join a club or a sports team. It may be easier for your teen to understand what others are saying if they're all doing the same thing.

Once your teen starts meeting people, he'll know more people to say hi to in the hallway. This will help your child:

- Feel good about himself
- Feel like he's part of the school
- Feel like other people like him.
- Join in groups doing things that your teenager is good at. Showing what he's good at can help others respect your child more. It can also help your child feel better about himself.
- Meet other teens through the Internet. On the Internet, it doesn't matter if you can speak or not.

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You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/growingup/teen/friends.jsp>