



Nineline **1-800-999-9999** it's free!

relationships

Are you concerned about a child or teen regarding friendship problems, boyfriend, girlfriend, authority figure, cult or gang?

what relationship problems are young people facing today?

Relationships can either build one up or bring one down. If you are concerned about a child or teen coping with a problem **friendship, boyfriend, girlfriend, authority figure, cult** or **gang** this is the place to talk to someone who can help at the Nineline.

Friendships should be supportive, respectful and based on common interests. But sometimes jealousy, possessiveness and control issues can threaten to 'break up' a non-romantic friendship. Encourage the teen to try talking with their friend about why the friendship isn't working anymore. If they won't take the time to listen and try to work things out, the teen may realize they have outgrown the friendship. It is hard to admit this and, sometimes, losing a friend can lead to feelings of grief or depression. It's important to remember that as they grow and change, so will their interests and their choice of friends, but also support what they are going through and do not diminish their feelings. Remember, to someone who is losing a friend, especially an adolescent, it is an extremely big deal and can affect his or her daily performances.

Dating a boyfriend or girlfriend is an important experience, especially in adolescents who are constantly experimenting with life's emotions. It is important for the teen to fully understand that a good relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend is based on mutual respect, shared interests and sexual attraction. Sometimes relationships with a boyfriend or girlfriend go sour. Jealousy, possessiveness, anger or issues of power and control can spoil the romance.

Authority figures, like a teacher, boss, religious mentor, sitter, stepparent, parent's boyfriend or girlfriend, a counselor or other staff in a foster or group home, can sometimes take advantage of their authority. Normally these are people one should be able to look up to and trust. But if an authority figure is emotionally or physically abusive towards a teen or child you are concerned about, you need to help them seek a professional that can help them out of the current situation – immediately! When someone under the age of 18 is physically, sexually or emotionally hurt or taken advantage of by someone responsible for protecting them, it is considered child abuse. The abuse may happen only once, but often it will continue until someone who can help is notified, and puts an end to it.

Cults can be difficult to recognize, difficult to resist and even more difficult to leave. There are different kinds of cults – religious, satanic/ritual, new age, political and commercial. They use similar techniques to control their members including extreme peer pressure to make one feel like they belong. They also use isolation; sleep deprivation, sensory overload and poor nutrition to force one into accepting, non-questioning state of mind for better control. If someone you know joins a cult, they may find themselves in a situation where they have no control over their life. This makes it difficult to dialogue or help them. It may be difficult for them to control their finances or relationships with friends and family outside the cult. They may even experience negative physical and psychological side effects. Obviously the best way to avoid this is to resist joining but once they've joined, they will need to find someone they can trust to help them find the strength to leave. There are also significant and



deep-rooted reasons for one to join a cult. Some possibilities are low self-esteem, trouble keeping close friends and conflict with family members, and the need to feel as though they belong to something, anything. These characteristics also need to be addressed and dealt with so that the teen will be able to find the strength and motivation to leave the cult, but also so that they may make smart decisions in the future.

Gangs also prey on vulnerable, insecure children and adolescents who want to "belong" to a "family" of their peers. But once someone joins, they are subjected to a lot of controlling behavior aimed at making them participate in illegal, sometimes violent, activities. Gangs can be very attractive to young people in poorer neighborhoods or areas where there is much violence due to gang related activity such as drug trafficking and selling. Membership in a gang offers protection, status, social relationships, and sometimes an income. In some cases, membership is coerced through threats and intimidation. There is little choice but to join the gang or be in an untenable or vulnerable situation in the neighborhood.



what are the warning signs?

Warning signs that your teen is having trouble in a relationship can sometimes be fairly obvious. To an adolescent, relationships can be one of the most important events in their lives. If something is wrong, they may display signs of general frustration in life, such as irritability, depression, nervousness, laziness, rebellion, and a general discontent. Often they may fish around for answers to problems they are having in their relationships. Be keen to catch their subtleness and do not lessen their feelings. Talk to them as though these issues really are as important as they feel they are.

If you suspect the child you are concerned with has become apart of a **cult** or **gang**, the following are some warning signs to look for:

1. It may be difficult for the child or teen to control relationships with friends and family outside the cult. They may also have trouble with their finances and other various responsibilities.
2. They may experience negative physical and psychological side effects
3. Sudden negative or violent change in their attitude or behavior
4. Lack of concern or care in regular daily functions, even things they use to enjoy or participate in
5. Suddenly withdrawn or impulsively violent
6. More secretive than before or hanging out with a noticeably different crowd



what can I say or do to help the child or teen I care about?

When you're ready, we will help you figure out what to do to solve your teens' relationship-related problems and or conflicts. Just call the **Covenant House Neline** at **1-800-999-9999**; TTY: 1-800-999-9915 or follow this link to the [Neline Forum on relationships](#). The Neline staff is ready to talk with you *any time* of day. You talk. We'll listen.

Other resources we recommend include:

Child Help USA, 1-800-422-4453, provides crisis counseling, referrals and help in reporting child abuse.

National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence, 1-888-222-2000, provides information and referrals for help.

Anti-Gang Hotline, 1-800-445-3632