

Level-Up Your Friend Game

Have you ever thought about what it really means to be a friend? You hang out, you have fun, but how do you support each other? How do you help each other make healthy choices when it's hard? How do you act when you disagree?

It comes down to leveling up your friend game. Leveled-up friends create connections where you each feel safe to be yourselves while understanding life is happening and you're growing through it together.

Activity #1—Looking In: Naming Your Values

A first step to leveling up your friend game is to take time to understand your own values.

RANK IT: Review the list of values and their descriptions below. Take some time to think of a person you look up to (like a personal hero) and a close friend. Then, rank the top 5 values you like about (1) the person you look up to, (2) your friend, and (3) yourself.

Value	Description	Top 5 Values:		
		Hero	Friend	Self
Kind	Treating others with respect, consideration, and compassion			
Generous	Sharing your time, resources, and support			
Humble	Willing to admit when you don't know something or when you're wrong and to learn from others			
Loving	Showing affection and appreciation			
Accepting	Embracing people for who they are, even their flaws			
Patient	Taking time to support others through wins and struggles			
Humorous	Able to lighten the mood through laughter			
Spiritual	Feeling connected to things beyond yourself, like nature, culture, or faith			
Respectful	Valuing other's opinions, beliefs, and boundaries			
Trustworthy	Being reliable and keeping promises			
Resourceful	Finding ways to show up even when it's not obvious			



Leveled-up Friendships

Value	Description	Top 5 Values:		
		Hero	Friend	Self
Listening	Focusing on what's being shared without distractions			
Considerate	Caring for other people's comfort, being thoughtful and sensitive			

Write about it: *Compare your rankings. What do the similarities and differences say about what you expect from people you admire, your friends, and yourself?*



Activity #2—Looking Out: Understanding How Your Values Could Help

Notice how each value in the chart above speaks to an action? A second step to leveling up your friend game is to use your values to support your actions. The following tips show how values can guide actions and reactions during harder conversations with friends.

Tip	Scenario	Response Options	Why It Matters
Be there (even when it's not easy) The values: Kind and trustworthy	Your friend hasn't been around much lately, and they seem down at school. You want them to know you're there for them.	Don't just give up! Text them, offer to bring them their favorite snack, or ask if it's OK to sit with them even if they don't want to talk.	Showing up when someone is struggling lets them know they're not alone and you have their back.
Hear your friend out without judgment The values: Listening and patient	Your friend is really close with her older brother. He and his friends have been using substances, and she admits she's curious about trying them herself. She wonders if they're as bad as they're made out to be.	Let your friend talk without interrupting or judging her. Help her understand what's driving her curiosity. Ask open-ended questions like, "What are you curious about?" "What's making you want that?" "What's something healthy you could you do that might address what you really need?"	Creating a safe space for people to share their feelings is essential for helping them understand why they are feeling that way.
Find resources and trusted adults The value: Humble and resourceful	Your friend is late to school a lot and often misses soccer practice. In the past, they've shared their parent is hung over a lot, and it's hard to get a ride. Lately,	You don't have to have all the answers, you just need to know where to find them. Go to a trusted adult or ask your school counselor what resources are	Helping your friend find resources, make a plan, and move forward can ease their emotional load so they don't feel alone, confused, or overwhelmed.

Tip	Scenario	Response Options	Why It Matters
	they've been skipping classes, too, and they say they just don't care anymore. You know their grades are dropping, and they've been benched during games.	available. Share what you learn with your friend and help them work through it.	
Celebrate the good times (and the small wins!) The values: Generous and loving	Your friend has been down lately. They're frustrated that their older sister got high the other day after being clean for only a few weeks, and now she's starting all over again.	Let them know it's OK to feel frustrated, and life doesn't follow a straight path. Remind them that their sister can start again and that takes a lot of strength. Encourage them to help their sister celebrate getting back on the healthy path she wants to follow. Spend some time together. Celebrate with a movie, take a walk together, or get some ice cream.	Celebrating successes, big and small, helps your friend build their confidence and ability to keep moving forward no matter what.
Set boundaries and respect your friend's boundaries The values: Respectful and considerate	You and your friend are at a party. You know there's a chance some kids will be using substances, and you two want to get on the same page about what you'll do if they're offered to either of you.	Don't be afraid to say "no" and try not to be offended when you hear "no." Just be honest and maybe suggest something else that would be a healthy choice that you both would like to do.	Your boundaries are important for your well-being, and they help guide your friendship.

Most importantly...

Be real. Lean into who you are. Don't try to be someone you're not. If you're unsure about how to respond or what choice to make, think about your values and let them guide you. You've got this!

The value: Acceptance.

Why it matters: Being yourself helps you be the friend you'd want in your corner.



Accepting Each Other: Turning To Values To Level Up Your Friendship

Act it out: Consider the scenario you were assigned, first creating your own healthy response using the values we discussed before. Then consider how your hero would react to this scenario? How would your close friend react? Once you have created your healthy response, act it out with your partner/group and discuss if you

Activity #3—Coming Together: Turning To Friends For Hard Choices

Leveled-up friends help each other feel less alone when dealing with confusing choices, especially when faced with pressure to try opioids, like fentanyl, and other substances or when figuring out how to stop using them.

Feeling pressure to use. Let your friend know they have options and come up with other ways to have fun or relax.

Struggling with substance use. Listen to your friend and try to understand why they use without judging them. Come prepared with resources you can share to help them quit.

Celebrating healthy choices. Celebrate your friend's successes—even if they're small—and encourage them to keep trying when they make mistakes.

Notes

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should change anything to be a leveled-up friend.
