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YOU SAID IT

Are you nervous about starting high school? How do you deal with it? -- From Aamina, 12



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High School: The Social Scene



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- The Social Scene
- Margo's Story
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What's the #1 thing that kids get nervous and excited about when they think about high school? That's right: social life!

In high school, we're at an age where we're going through lots of physical and emotional changes, and these changes can really affect our relationships with peers. High school is also when issues like cliques, popularity, and bullying can get more intense.

Friendships

It's a simple fact: in high school, friendships change. They do in middle school, too, but the combination of academic competition, changing levels of maturity, and developing interests can put a strain on your existing relationships. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Accept that your friendships will change.** Maybe you and your friend will stay BFF's. Maybe you won't. Either way, understand that all friendships change and grow over time. If you're no longer getting anything out of a relationship, don't hang onto it just for "old time's sake" or out of habit-especially if it keeps you from building something new with someone else.
- **Stay open to making new friends in your current classes.** You might not have the same schedule as your middle school friends. You'll be happiest if you have friends in the places where you spend the most time.
- **Find other people who like the same things you do.** This will happen naturally if you know enough about yourself and what you're good at. It's important to be with people who are interested in what you're interested in, so stay open to making friends in your new activities.
- **Try to think outside the idea of "cliques" or "groups."** This is a tough one. If you're getting pressure from one group of friends not to hang out with someone else, maybe you're better off as a free agent.



High School, Hollywood Style Test your cinema smarts!

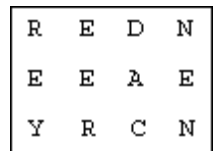
VOTE NOW

What is your attitude towards popularity in high school?

- It's very important.
- It's a little important, but it isn't everything.
- I don't really care about being popular.

Vote Now

PLAY IT



"High School" Word Search

- **Remember that nothing is permanent.** It's natural to feel sad about drifting away from a friend. You might be distant for a year, then get re-acquainted when you find yourself in a new class together. Anything can happen; just listen to your heart and keep the lines of communication open!
- **Get a head start.** Are you starting at a new school where you don't know anyone? Maybe you've just moved to town, or you're switching from being homeschooled or in a private academy. If you can, jump on opportunities to get to know other students before you start school. Look for local community programs or town events where you can meet your future classmates.

For more info, check out IML's advice on what to do **When Friends Fight**.

Dating

We don't have to remind you that in high school, dating takes on a whole new meaning. There will be lots of new possibilities, but also some new challenges, such as:

- **Making sure you and your parents have all the rules laid out.** At what age are you allowed to start dating? How late can you stay out? Are there places you can and can't go? You can open up a general conversation about this by asking, "I'm going to have a lot more opportunities in high school. How will that affect house rules? How can I have more freedom and responsibilities?"
- **Sticking to these rules, even if other kids have less strict ones.** The more you prove you're responsible and trustworthy, the more likely those rules will loosen up as you get older.
- **Whoa! Is that 11th grader really asking you out?** Are you comfortable dating someone older than you? If not, don't feel pressured to do it just because it's "cool" to go out with a junior.
- **Have you and a parent had the "sex talk"?** Maybe you're waiting for an adult to bring it up. Maybe you've had it, but that was in middle school and it's time for an updated version! Either way, make sure you get all your questions answered by someone you trust. If a family member isn't an option, speak to a school counselor or health teacher.
- **There's no "schedule" that says when we're supposed to start dating.** You and your friends may not have the opportunity -- or permission -- to date at the same time. Perhaps your best friend has just gotten her first real boyfriend, and you've never even kissed anyone! As hard as it may be, try to concentrate on classes, activities, and existing relationships with people.

Smoking, alcohol, and drugs

Do you imagine the high school hallways filled with students offering you cigarettes? Are you afraid that if you don't agree to try alcohol or drugs, nobody will like you? These fears are common and totally normal, but remember:

- **It's never as bad as you might think it will be.** Most high school students say that what they heard about the pressure to try smoking, alcohol, or drugs was totally blown out of

proportion.

- **At the same time, there will always be students involved in bad behavior.** This is a reality whether your high school is in the 'burbs or a big city. You can't predict how or when you might encounter these people, so consider coming up with a "pre-plan" for how to deal with it if you do. For instance, decide what you'll say if someone offers you something you don't want to try, or promise yourself that you'll walk away from a gathering where you don't feel comfortable.
- **Focus on the positive.** In other words, figure out what you DO want in your life and concentrate on that. The things you DON'T want -- the negative -- will fade away and hopefully not even be an issue.

Remember that if you're having trouble with peer pressure, or you're uneasy about something that your friends are doing or saying, talk to a trusted adult like a parent, guardian, therapist or counselor.

For more info, check out IML's advice on [Smoking](#) and [Drug Abuse](#).

In the next section, we hear [Margo's Story](#).

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