

# 4 Steps to Ensure Children Become Well-Adjusted Adults

I recently had a chance meeting with the father of a childhood acquaintance. Upon realizing who he was, I mentioned that I used to hang out with his daughter a bit. He laughed and replied, “She probably wasn’t the best influence on you.” I gave a polite chuckle in response, and we soon parted ways.

As he left, I drifted briefly back to my interactions with his daughter. He was right. The time I spent with her was rough. She brought a difficult dynamic into our neighborhood that soon made a couple sets of parents uneasy, prompting them to discourage their children from interacting with her. Even at the time, I sensed their caution was justified.

This thought hit home even more while reading Rod Dreher’s best-selling book, [The Benedict Option](#). In it, Dreher cautions parents to not take their children’s friends for granted. He explains:

*“Though parental influence is critical, research shows that nothing forms a young person’s character like their peers. The culture of the group of which your child is a part growing up will be the culture he or she adopts as their own.”*

We all know how important friends are in an individual’s life, but all too often we forget just *how* important and life-changing they can be. Considering Dreher’s warning the question then becomes, how do we ensure our children form friendships which help them become the good, upstanding adults we want them to be?

I believe there are four basic steps parents can take to achieve this outcome:

## **1. Choose Schools and Activities Wisely**

Helicopter parenting has a bad rap these days. No parent wants to be the one in the hovercraft who never trains a child to operate on his own.

However, our fears about helicopter parenting should not cause us to draw back from careful observation of potential peers in the schools, soccer teams, or drama clubs that our children frequent. Being aware of the influences on your child and knowing when to steer them from bad ones is a difficult, but essential, part of being a parent.

## **2. Make Home a Happy Place**

Parents need to be the authorities in a household and not their children's peers. That said, it's perfectly okay for parents to have fun with their kids. Parents who balance hard work and appropriate discipline with fun and play are often the ones who maintain the best family relationships as children leave the nest.

## **3. Practice Hospitality**

Home should be a happy place not only for your own children, but other children as well. Parents who welcome their children's peers into their home not only receive firsthand knowledge of the friends' character and the influence they have on their children, but they also have the added benefit of being a positive role model in the lives of those other children.

## **4. Instill Good Morals**

Many of today's parents buy into the thought that their children have the wherewithal to choose how they live their lives – whether they go to church, what type of behaviors they practice, and so on. What they forget, however, is that a life is not well-built without a strong foundation. Parents who both teach and model their values and beliefs, making them an important part of family life, are far more likely to see their children choose friends who adopt those same values.

These friends, in turn, give children positive peer pressure to continue in the morals they were raised with.

According to Dreher, the peers most influential in forming a child's life are likely those in his middle childhood. Since this period of life comes faster than parents wish, many may believe the window of opportunity has passed, their child's friends chosen, and the damage done.

Fortunately, there's still hope. Dreher writes:

*“Researchers find that damage to a child's moral core can often be repaired if he is taken away from a bad peer group. What's more, determined parents who run a disciplined home, and who immerse their children in a good peer group, can lay a good foundation, no matter how lax they have been until now.”*

So, based on your child's friends, what kind of adult will they become? And if you don't like the prospect, are you willing to change course and begin the hard task of laying a good foundation while your child is still formable?

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