

“How can I ask my friends not to talk unkindly or inappropriately about others?”

Gossip, unkind words, vulgarity—you’ve probably heard all of these things while walking your school hallways. Sometimes your friends are the ones participating, and you might feel uncomfortable and unsure of how to respond, but you can make a difference by being a good example.

Although it isn’t fun to stand up to others, remember that “profane, vulgar, or crude language or gestures, as well as immoral jokes, are offensive to the Lord and to others.”¹ And even when said in jest, unkind words still hurt.

If your friends say inappropriate or unkind things about others, “good-naturedly encourage them to choose other words. If they persist, politely walk away or change the subject.”² Explain that you believe that every person is a child of God and should be respected accordingly. Choose to be a supportive friend to everyone rather than an enemy who criticizes and puts others down. Your strong example will be a helpful model for your friends.

For the Strength of Youth teaches that “clean and intelligent language is evidence of a bright and wholesome mind.”³ Let your words reflect your beliefs, and the Spirit will stay with you to provide guidance in these difficult situations.

And stand assured—true friends will respect you for your decision to use clean, uplifting language that emphasizes the positive qualities of others.



Help Each Other to Stay Positive

My friends and I got bracelets, and every time one of us said

something mean about another person, we would flick the speaker’s bracelet. This was a good constant reminder to keep our thoughts and words positive.

Caroline J., age 18, Utah, USA



Ask for God’s Help

Prayer will help you get strength from God to know how to speak to others.

First, ask the Lord to know what to say to your friends. Also ask Him to help your friends understand the importance of looking at everyone as beloved children of Heavenly Father. Emphasize the importance of seeing the best in people and not saying bad things about them.

Victória Kércia M., age 19, Piauí, Brazil

Embrace Differences with Love

My friends must know that because we each have different strengths, we can benefit one another. In spite of people’s imperfections, we must always have more love for them, and we must also believe in the power to change that is found in the Savior’s atoning sacrifice.

Esther M., age 19, Mbujimayi, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Be Direct

You can just tell your friends nicely, “Hey, stop that. I don’t appreciate it,” or “Please don’t talk like that. That is rude.” After all, one of two great commandments is to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).

Clayton P., age 14, Arizona, USA

Change Their Perspective

You can simply tell them that what they are doing is not correct and that they should try to make someone happy rather than sad. You could even ask them how they would feel if they were the ones receiving unkind remarks from other people. Help them see the situation from another perspective. By helping other people be better, you will be able to feel the Spirit more often, and the Lord will bless you for your righteous actions.

Darren O., age 15, Utah, USA



Have Courage

Just like Esther, Joseph Smith, Joseph of Egypt, and many other scriptural figures, you can have the courage to stop your friends from speaking inappropriately about others. I was going through the same situation, and I had the courage to talk to my friends in a loving and understanding way. In the end, they accepted and understood how important it is to use pure and worthy language! Besides reading the scriptures and praying, fasting helps a lot

in those situations. Pray and ask with faith that our Heavenly Father will give you the courage to speak and touch the hearts of your friends.

Paola H., age 17, San Salvador, El Salvador



Be an Example

The best way to do this is by setting the example. Take the initiative to say good and positive things about whoever is being talked about. You will be amazed by how fast the conversation can change.

Elder Eads, age 24, Korea Seoul South Mission

Explain the Drawbacks

Tell your friends how many positive experiences and interactions with other people they are missing out on. Explain that saying curse words is not good because it distances you from other people and pollutes your mind. Plus, good people avoid you if you use bad language.

Elisa Ferreira S., age 16, Minas Gerais, Brazil



WORDS HAVE POWER

“Words have surprising power, both to build up and to tear down. We can all probably remember negative words that brought us low and other words spoken with love that made our spirits soar. Choosing to say only that which is positive about—and to—others lifts and strengthens those around us and helps others follow in the Savior’s way.”

Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, “I Will Bring the Light of the Gospel into My Home,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2016, 7.

NOTES

1. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 128.
2. *True to the Faith*, 129.
3. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 20.

UPCOMING QUESTION

“I’ve been struggling with the same temptations for a long time. It’s frustrating. How can I move past them?”

Submit your answer and, if desired, a high-resolution photograph by March 15, 2018, at liahona.lds.org (click “Submit an Article or Feedback”).

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.