Life experiences expose us to a variety of people that we can choose to be our friends. We can choose to develop positive, supportive friendships or negative, destructive relationships. Learning to distinguish between the two can help shape us into the people we want to become.
In most cases, your personality will influence your relationships with your family, friends, and classmates and contribute to health and well being. Listed are four facts about friendships.

Fact one says peer friendships are similar to self. What this means is that we tend to choose friends who are similar in ourselves in one way or another.

Fact two says peer friendships are a healthy venue for positive development. What this means is that within our group of friends or perhaps with one or two friends, we find a safe environment to be ourselves and find our own unique identity.

Number three, says that peer friendships are multi-layered groups. What this means is that most of us belong to different groups of friends or have different cliques in which we hang out.

Our last fact, number four say peer friendships are Dynamic. What this means is that our relationship with our friends can go from being a very close, intimate relationship to a distant relationship. Our relationships change, sometimes on a daily basis.
Peers tend to choose friends who are similar to self. When developing friendships, most people tend to gravitate towards people with whom they have similar characteristics. Some of the characteristics we look for are people in our same age group. People who are our same gender and ethnicity. We use our socioeconomic status to find friends who have a similar socioeconomic status. And finally, we tend to make friends with people who enjoy doing things we like or have similar interests. What might be some other things we look when developing friendships?

Together, with your group, find things that you all have in common. Discuss your similarities while celebrating your diversity.
Ask students to explain what they believe this proverb to mean.

In their journals, have students write whether they agree or disagree with the proverb. Have them explain why.
Within friendships, we can become our own unique individual. We can feel safe to explore our identity, learn about social norms, and practice our autonomy. We can have some of the happiest experiences within the safety network of our friends.
Peer Friendships are Multi-layered

Multi-layered means having several different layers or viewpoints. In terms of friends, having groups of multi-layered friends simply means that teen today often belong to many different groups and these groups have different viewpoints, beliefs, and interests.
Dynamic means active or forceful. In a relationship sense, the word dynamic simply means actively changing. Friendships are always changing. Sometimes a friend may be closer to you, thus becoming a best friend. Later, you may find your interests with this friend have changed and your relationship may not be as close. All our relationships are dynamic.
What makes a friendship start? There are some valuable traits you can possess which will help you develop friendships:

- Have a positive attitude—people enjoy being around people that have a bright disposition and have a sense of humor.
- Be accepting of one another—remember that no one is perfect, everyone has faults and differences. No one wants to be criticized for their faults.
- Be caring and have manners—Do you respond better to people if they show you they care for you? Most people are the same way. Smile and remember it is the little things that count! Remember to say thank you and please.
- Personal hygiene—People which practice good hygiene habits are more pleasant to be with.

Don’t forget to introduce yourself and make the first move towards starting a friendship. Ask simple questions to get the conversation started and don’t forget your communication skills. Be a good listener. Compliments are good to give as long as you are sincere. Be patient, it takes time to develop a good friendship.
Sometimes a friendship can be taken for granted and friends forget to be caring and thoughtful of each other. How can you maintain your friendship? Remember it is the little things that count. Friends help each other out because they want to not because they have to. To have a friend, you must be a friend—reciprocity. To maintain a friendship, friends must benefit from each other; it is a mutual arrangement. Friends are also there for each other in good times and in bad times. Think about when you were going through a rough patch in your life. How did your friends help and support you? We have to be accepting of each other and sometimes you may not agree with your friends. A good friend will be honest and show respect regardless of differences of opinion. A strong friendship can build a foundation which will be able to withstand the differences.
People are consistently changing and growing as friendships are. When you no longer have common interests, music, schedules and activities, friendships may become strained. You need to decide if the friendship is worth saving or repairing. Some people will let a friendship die due to neglect. When a friendship is no longer meaningful, beneficial and uncomfortable, it may be time to end the friendship. Ending a friendship should be handled with tact and concern for all parties involved. It is easier when friends agree that it is better to end the friendship. You should be able to express yourself without blaming or judging the other person. When the friendship ends, you may feel rejected and in a sense feel like a failure. Look at yourself and be honest with yourself. Were you a good friend? Were your actions, thoughts and deeds friendship material? If the answer is no, this is a time for self reflection and self improvement.
Why Can’t We Be Friends?

References and Resources

Websites:
- NebGuide: Friendships, Peer Influence, and Peer Pressure During the Teen Years. Friendships are very much an important aspect of the teen years. Understanding the nature of peer influence can help support youth as they enter into this period and follow the path towards close friendships that are hallmarks of adolescence.
  - http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g1751.pdf
- Newspaper Clip Generator
  Create a newspaper article by entering information.  
  http://www.fodey.com/generators/newspaper/newspaper.asp

YouTube:
- You’ve Got a Friend in Me—Toy Story (Actual Clips)
  The song You’ve Got a Friend in Me from the movie Toy Story. Instead of being the scene from the movie, this great video is made up of a lot of different clips from the movie.
  http://youtu.be/9x50fVVzUI0