

As social beings, we are naturally influenced by those we meet in the course of our lives. This is particularly true for young people, whose character and personality are still malleable. Although friends play a central role in the lives of teenagers, in my opinion, it is the family which has a greater impact on young people. My view is based on psychological, intellectual and financial reasons.

Psychologically, the family is the central grounding factor for a young person, because the parents, brothers and sisters are the ones who actually love him or her. It is through thousands of life situations and family discussions that norms, values, customs, traditions and expectations are passed on to the youngster. The depth of relationship, developed over the years through shared joys and sorrows, place family members in an incomparably close bond which cannot easily be replicated by friends or anyone else.

Intellectually, the family impacts the young person's ability to think. Parents create the intellectual climate in the home. Whether children develop the habit of reading, studying hard or striving to achieve their goals depends largely on the parents' example. Whether youngsters agree or disagree with their parents' political or religious views, the family remains a reference point against which young people develop their individuality. In Asian cultures, where respect for elders is an important value, the family plays an even more central role in shaping the young person's world view.