



# Adolescents' Friendships and Mental health



## **INTRODUCTION**

Friendships play an important role in adolescents' emotional and psychological development as they navigate the complexities of their social world. However, these bonds are not always resistant to challenges, and friendship breakups can have a significant impact on the well-being of teenagers

## **KEY TOPICS**

1. Importance of Teenager Friendships
2. Types of Friendship Breakups
3. Impact of Friendship Breakups
4. Coping Strategies and Resilience
5. Counselling Support
6. Rebuilding and Forming New Friendships



# IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS

## **Social Skill Development**

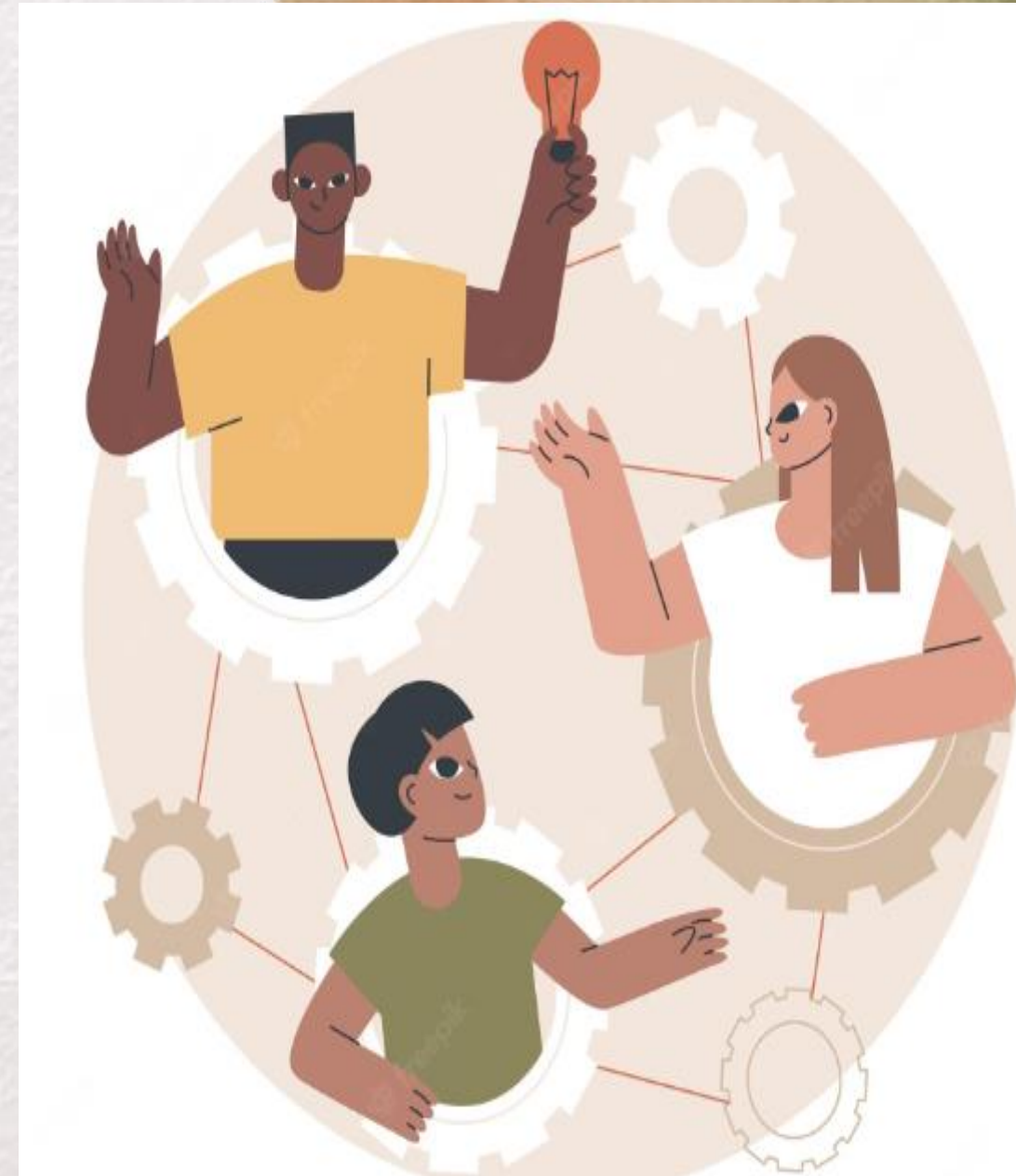
Interacting with peers in friendships serves as a crucial platform for developing social skills. Adolescents learn to navigate complex social situations, engage in meaningful conversations, and interpret nonverbal cues.

Through conflicts and disagreements with friends, teenagers gain experience in resolving differences, negotiating, and compromising. These skills are transferable to various contexts, enabling them to build and maintain healthy relationships throughout their lives.

## **Emotional Support and Validation**

Adolescents often experience intense emotions and uncertainties as they navigate the challenges of identity formation and peer pressure.

Having close friends to confide in and lean on offers a safe outlet to express feelings and share experiences. Feeling understood and validated by friends enhances their sense of self-worth and reduces feelings of isolation, providing a buffer against emotional distress.





# IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS

## **Mental Health Benefits**

Having supportive friends who offer emotional comfort and understanding reduces the risk of mental health issues like anxiety and depression. The sense of belonging and connection with friends provides a buffer against stress, fostering emotional resilience and coping abilities. Friends may also encourage help-seeking behavior, prompting teenagers to seek professional support if needed.

## **Belonging and Socialization**

Friendships foster a sense of belonging and acceptance within a peer group. Adolescents often seek to fit in and be accepted by their friends, reinforcing their social identity and boosting self-esteem. Shared activities and experiences with friends create opportunities for socialization, promoting positive social interactions and a sense of camaraderie. Friendships enrich teenagers' lives by providing moments of fun, adventure, and shared memories that contribute to a strong support network.





# IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS

## Identity and self discovery

- Interacting with different friends exposes adolescents to diverse perspectives, interests, and hobbies.
- Friend groups often have shared values and norms, influencing teenagers' self-perception and behavior.
- Adolescents may experiment with different roles and identities within their friendships, facilitating self-exploration and helping them better understand who they are and who they want to become.
- Breakups can disrupt the sense of identity formed within the friendship, leading to a period of insecurity, introspection and reevaluation.

## IDENTITY VS ROLE CONFUSION

Age Range: 12 to 18 years.

Theory: Erikson's Psychosocial Theory.

### DEFINITION

During adolescence, individuals explore different social roles and experiment with various identities. If they attain a strong sense of self, they build the resilience that allows them to go after their dreams. Not establishing an identity during these years can result in insecurity and doubt about who they are.

### EXAMPLE

Adolescents derive comfort from their social circle and gain a feeling of significance. This support helps to facilitate personality maturation. Furthermore, through friendships, teenagers can learn how to navigate relationships and mediate conflicts that arise inside or outside the group.



# Types of Teen Friendship Breakups



## Drifting Apart:

Friends naturally grow apart due to changing circumstances or interests.

The relationship loses its closeness and intimacy over time.

Examples: Attending different schools, moving to different cities, or forming new friend groups

## Mutual Decisions:

Both friends agree to end the friendship on amicable terms.

Reasons may include changing interests, personal growth, or new social circles.

Examples: Gradually realizing their interests have diverged, deciding to focus on different academic or extracurricular paths.

## Betrayal or Conflicts:

The friendship ends due to a breach of trust or unresolved conflicts.

Examples: Sharing a secret, spreading rumors, or engaging in dishonest behavior.



# Types of Teen Friendship Breakups



## Rejection or Exclusion:

One friend intentionally distances themselves from the other, leading to exclusion.

The excluded friend may feel isolated and hurt by the rejection.

Examples: Being excluded from group activities or events without explanation.



## Bullying or Peer Pressure:

The friendship ends due to negative peer interactions or bullying.

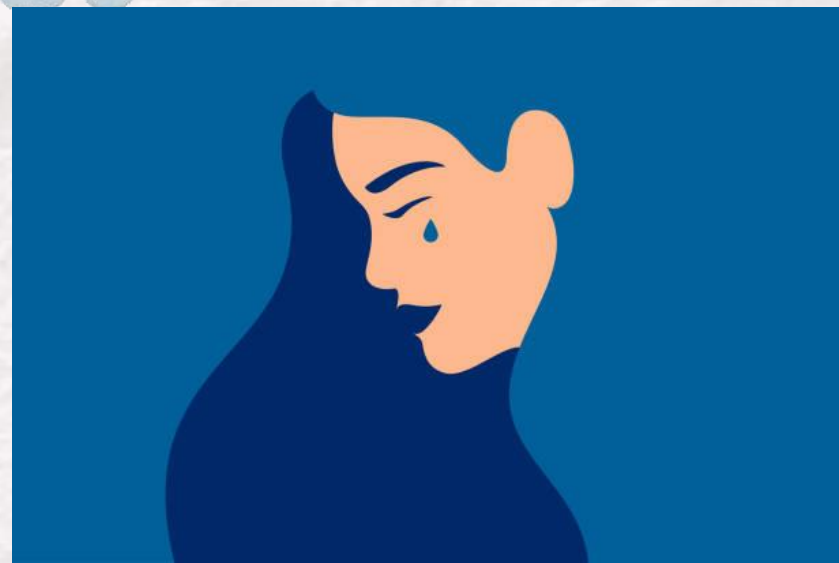
External influences or social pressures contribute to the breakup.

Examples: A friend encouraging others to exclude someone, engaging in hurtful behavior under pressure from peers



# Impact of Friendship Breakups

## (Emotional)



### **Grief and Loss:**

Friendship breakups can trigger profound feelings of grief and loss as teenagers mourn the end of a meaningful relationship. The emotional bond shared with the friend may lead to a sense of emptiness and sadness.



### **Self-Esteem and Identity:**

Adolescents often tie their self-worth and identity to their friendships. A breakup can lead to questioning one's worth and self-concept, impacting their confidence and how they view themselves.



### **Loneliness and Isolation:**

Following a friendship breakup, teenagers may experience loneliness and social isolation, especially if they relied heavily on the friendship for support and companionship.



### **Anxiety and Depression:**

Friendship breakups can increase vulnerability to anxiety and depression due to the overwhelming emotions and sense of rejection experienced.



# Impact of Friendship Breakups

## (Academic and Performance Effects)



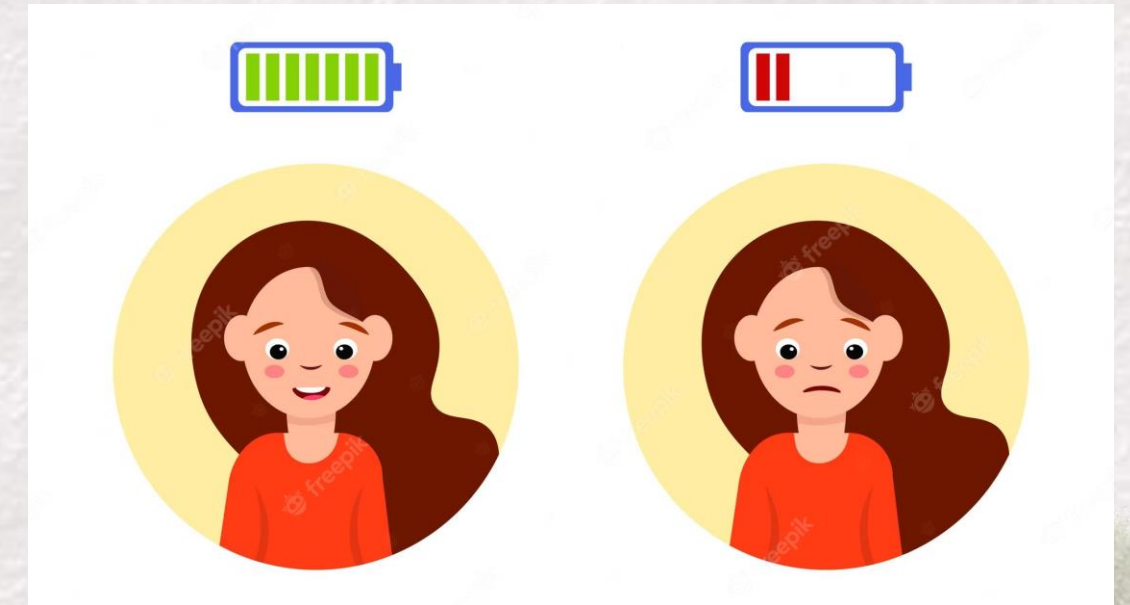
### **Distraction and Difficulty Focusing:**

Emotional distress caused by the breakup can lead to difficulty concentrating on schoolwork and other activities, hindering academic performance.



### **Decline in Academic Performance:**

Disrupted routines and emotional turmoil can result in a decline in academic performance as teenagers struggle to cope with the aftermath of the breakup.



### **Decreased Motivation and Participation:**

The emotional toll of a friendship breakup can lead to reduced motivation and participation in previously enjoyed activities, affecting extracurricular involvement and overall engagement.



# Impact of Friendship Breakups

## Impact on Other Relationships

- **Strained Relationships with Mutual Friends:**

The friendship breakup can create tension with mutual friends who may feel caught in the middle or pressured to take sides.

- **Trust Issues and Difficulty Forming New Friendships:**

The breakup may lead to trust issues, making it challenging for teenagers to form new close friendships.



## Long-Term Psychological Consequences

- **Potential Impact on Future Relationships:**

The friendship breakup can influence teenagers' future relationships, affecting their ability to trust and form deep connections. or even avoid forming close relationships altogether

- **Lingering Effects of Unresolved Emotions:**

If emotions from the friendship breakup remain unresolved, they may impact teenagers' emotional well-being for an extended period.



# COUNSELLING INVENTATIONS USED TO SUPPORT ADOLESCENTS GOING THROUGH FRIENDSHIP BREAKUPS

- Compassion-focused therapy (CFT) seeks to promote mental and emotional health by encouraging clients in treatment to be compassionate toward themselves and others. Compassion, both toward oneself and toward others, is an emotive response that is considered by many to be an essential component of well-being. It is used to treat low self esteem in adolescents





## COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS USED TO SUPPORT ADOLESCENTS GOING THROUGH FRIENDSHIP BREAKUPS

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an effective, evidence-based type of talk therapy for adolescents. CBT is used by psychologists with teenagers to help them identify irrational or negative thought patterns, allowing them to perceive circumstances clearly, analyze them, and respond in a healthy way.
- The core principle of CBT is that thoughts influence emotions, which influence behavior. Allowing distorted and bad thoughts to develop, according to this logic, leads in difficult feelings and harmful conduct. It is used to treat anxiety, depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, PTSD

### The 3 C's of Cognitive Therapy

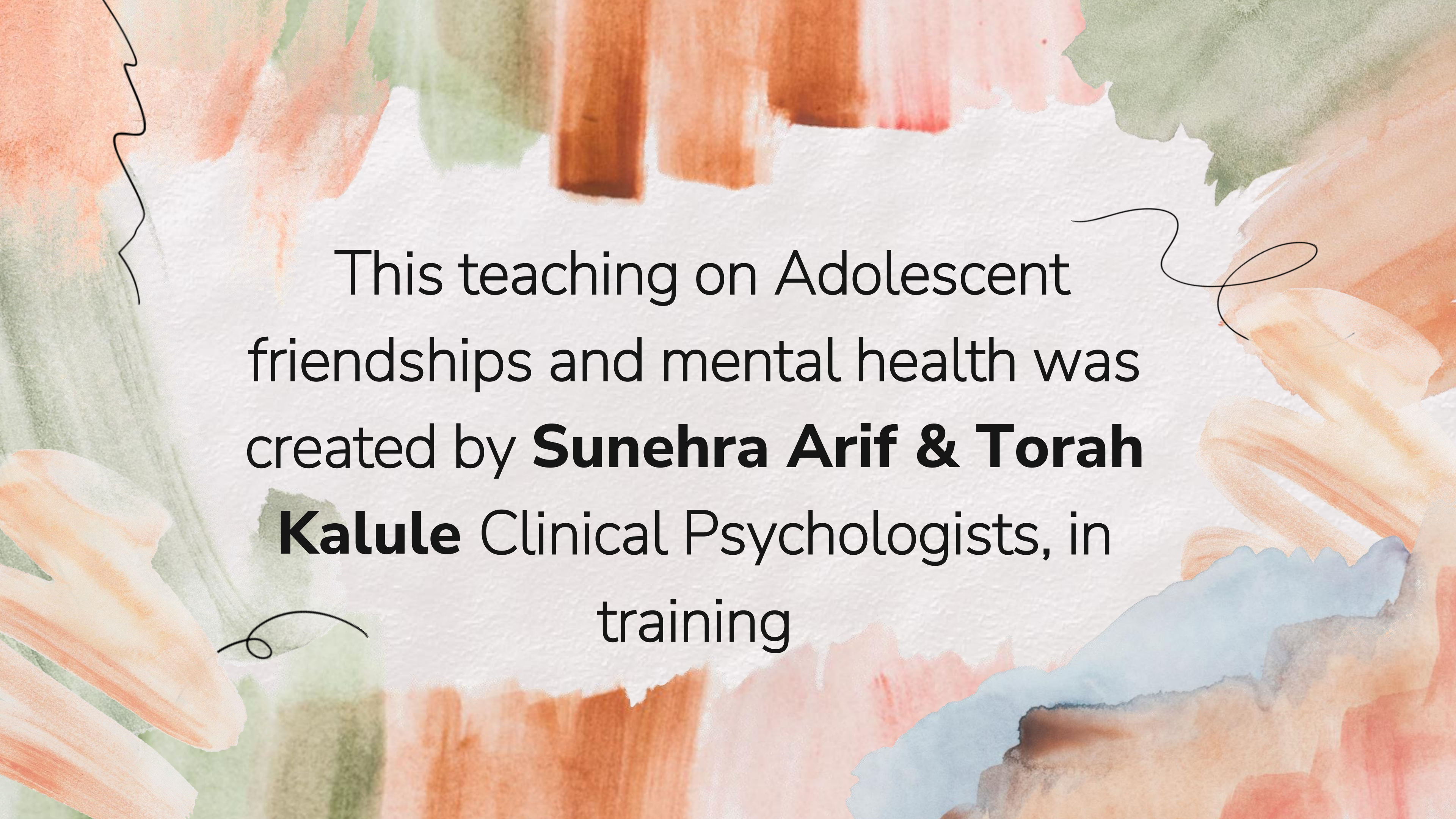
-  **atch**  
Identify the thought that came before the emotion
-  **heck**  
Reflect on how accurate and useful the thought is
-  **hange**  
Change the thought to a more accurate or helpful one as needed



- Motivational enhancement therapy (MET) is a person-centered, directive approach to therapy that focuses on increasing a person's motivation to improve. Those who participate in self-destructive activities may be indifferent or lack motivation to stop their behavior, despite the negative impact on their health, family life, or social functioning.
- The objective of MET is to foster an environment that promotes the adolescent's determination and self-control. Instead of confronting the client's defense mechanisms through confrontational discourse, the therapist helps the client develop positive affirmations and an internal willingness to facilitate change. When this occurs, the client becomes receptive to the healing process and advances toward







This teaching on Adolescent friendships and mental health was created by **Sunehra Arif & Torah Kalule** Clinical Psychologists, in training





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