



July 29, 2008

Parental Wisdom Emails

You Get to Choose Your Friends

When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends. - Japanese Proverb

August 3rd is Friendship Day

One of the many paradoxes in our children's world is that although we are more connected, we often feel isolated, making it difficult for our children to make and keep good friends.

How will our kids raised on screens learn about the more complicated give and take involved in meaningful and lasting relationships? Social networks causes us to be less patient and more terse:

- Why write out full words when you can say it in acronyms?
- Why talk when you can IM?
- Why meet people in person when you play online?
- On MySpace and Facebook you can be accepted or rejected as a friend with a simple click; **rarely is life so straightforward.**

Good friendships are important for all of us. Here are some ideas that can help:

- **Model the behavior** - demonstrate empathy in your dealings with friends and family. The best place children learn to be good friends is by watching you. Discuss how it's important to see things from another person's point of view. *"The only way to have a friend is to be one."* - Ralph Waldo Emerson
- **Make the first move** - if you watch little children on the playground you often find the first thing they will say to a child they've never met is, "Want to play with me?" That requires courage and means making the first move. Explain to your children simple questions are a way to know more about what a person does and doesn't like to do. Encourage them to take initiative and suggest playing a game, listening to music, or watching a movie.

- **Welcome the 'new kid'** - it's hard to be the new kid at school. A good idea to help them feel welcome is to create a 'new kid kit' which might include:
 - o A map of the school
 - o Telephone directory and calendar of events
 - o Student handbook or list of school rules
 - o Information about the teachers, subjects and classes offered
 - o List of clubs and activities and when they meet
 - o Location of lost and found
 - o PTO or PTA information (for parents)
 - o Map of the city or town
 - o Coupons from local businesses
 - o A note from kids indicating what makes their school unique
- **Hold your child accountable for his/her behavior.** Remind your children that teasing, bullying, and gossiping are wrong. If you see your child hurting another child, immediately call them on it, and talk to them as if they were in the place of the child being hurt. Also,
 - o Don't be a show off
 - o Do be a good listener; be sincerely interested in other people. *"You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you."* -Dale Carnegie
 - o Be accepting of differences in people; especially your friends. How boring a world it would be if we were all exactly the same. *"A true friend is someone who thinks that you are a good egg even though he knows that you are slightly cracked."* - Bernard Meltzer.
- **If your child is the one being hurt, listen** to how they feel, and explain that good friends don't behave that way, and they need to learn about the kinds of friend they can do without.
The lesson that they should remember how this feels and should not do it to anyone else. If you see a problem and your child doesn't bring it up, you can by telling them a friend of yours has a child with the same problem and ask them how they would recommend handling it.
- **Don't immediately jump in on every little problem.** The best way for a child to learn the give and take of friendship is through experience. Parents listening in on, and meddling in every situation stunts our children's growth in learning how to be a friend.
- **Give your child time to have friends.** There is no good news to over-scheduling our children. *"Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow-ripening fruit."* - Aristotle
- **A smile and positive outlook go a long way** - there is a saying that everybody smiles in the same language, so be sure to put on happy face. *"Peace starts with a smile."* - Mother Teresa

Use Friendship Day as an opportunity to connect with your out of touch friends.

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