

June 2005: Friends versus Acquaintances

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Newsletter Contents

- Publisher's Pen
- Empowering Parents and Teachers
- Empowering K.I.D.S. (Kids In Daily Situations)

Publisher's Pen: Friends versus Acquaintances

There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship.

Saint Thomas Aquinas.

The definition of friendship tends to be in loosely held terminology when we are young. Kids are often encouraged to be nice, share their things, and make friends at a young age. But, kids need to realize that they may go through many "friends" until they find true friends.

Americans are known for our sense of rapport, blurring the lines between acquaintances, friends, good friends and best friends. We tend to make immediate friendships, rather than use a time-based approach to establishing them.

In Europe, however, it may take a year or more to be considered one's friend. In other countries, when a youth is accepted as a friend by an elder, a celebration takes place, whereby the youth can address the elder informally, rather than formally.

Making immediate friendships can lead to disappointment and misunderstanding if children are not aware that there are levels of friends, depending on the level of intimacy they allow another person, based on a level of trust. Once children learn that their trust must be earned, along with the fact that they will know many people, but have a few trusted friends, they will become comfortable with letting friendship be a process.

May we learn how to help our children find good solid friendships, be confident enough to keep acquaintances at a distance, and develop the ability to know the difference between the two.

Smiles,

Elaine

Empowering Parents and Teachers:

Friendships may be on many levels, including levels of trust. The better you know someone, the more of a true friend you allow them to become. Are the people in your world acquaintances, friends, good friends or best friends? Add your own thoughts to this list, or make up flash cards to help distinguish between levels.

Level of Friendship
Level of Trust

Acquaintance

Someone you see around, who:

Goes to your school, may be in your class,

Rides the same bus,

Lives in the same neighborhood.

You may/may not know his/her name.

Can be a boy or a girl.

Don't know if he/she can be trusted.

Knows the same about you, but:

Doesn't know much about you personally.

Friend

Someone you have a common interest with.

Can be a boy or a girl.

Knows some things about you personally.

Can be trusted with a few things.

Have known him/her for a short while.

Have enjoyed each other's company.

Have had fun doing a few things.

Good Friend

Someone you are close to, who:

Can be a boy or a girl.

Knows a lot of things about you personally.

Can be trusted with most things.

Have known him/her for a long while.

Comfortable in each other's presence.

Have enjoyed doing many things together.

Best Friend

Someone you are close to, who:

Can be a boy or a girl.

Knows almost everything about you personally.

Can be trusted with everything.

Have known him/her for a long while.

Completely comfortable around each other.

Enjoy doing most things together.

Empowering K.I.D.S. (Kids In Daily Situations):

It's okay to test the level of trust with your friends. Here's how to put your friendships to the test.

Does your friend/s stick up for you when you are being mocked by others?

Does your friend/s take time to listen to you when you really need it?

Does your friend/s keep a secret?

Does your friend/s not judge you when something goes wrong?

Does your friend/s keep your best interests in mind?

Every so often, tell each friend a different secret. If the secret gets out, you will know who told it. If that happens, review the guidelines for friendship with that person if he/she is to remain your friend.

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