

February 2006: Rethinking Relationships

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Publisher's Pen: Rethinking Relationships

“Friendship... is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything.”

Muhammad Ali.

One of the common needs that human beings have is to fulfillment with another person or a group of people. To succeed in this area, it takes knowledge, work and the consistency of effort. But, we tend to channel our energies into work or artistic creation, and think that relationships will just happen.

Research has shown that people who have friends tend to have better physical health and report a better sense of psychological well-being than those with weak or no network of friends. Although some people may know a lot of people, they have a more select group of friends and an even smaller number of "best" friends.

Our children and adolescents need to know what rings true in a relationship, how to work at it, what it means to create a long-lasting friendship, and of course, that awkward subject for most parents – the intimate relationship. But most of all, children need to know how to love themselves first.

The stages that children go through in accomplishing the task of learning how to be in a friendship/relationship, when and how to move between friendships/relationships is usually accomplished by watching the adults in their lives. Our families and communities have a tremendous influence on our attitudes and actions.

Children need to know that human relationships are complex and that it takes time to nurture true friendships, and later, intimate partnerships. Adolescents and teens need to know that sexual relationships are a big deal and should not be taken casually. Deep down, most know that to be true. But, we all fall under the pressures of our society and our peers at times.

We all make mistakes in this area of our lives, but growth and change is possible if we are willing to take the time to learn from one another, while keeping our judgments at bay.

May we have the courage to help our children learn how to be successful in relationships by taking the time to listen, to encourage them, and to love them.

Smiles,

Elaine

Empowering Parents and Teachers:

Friendship: what it is, how to build it, how to maintain it, when to set limits, and how and why it may end.

Write down your thoughts to the statements below.

What is friendship?

The dictionary defines a friend as someone whom one knows, likes and trusts. Can you think of other qualities that a friend should have? (for example, loyalty, empathy, etc.)

How to build a friendship:

Building a friendship takes time for both children and adults. Listening, sharing, talking, working together on a project are a few things that build friendships. Tell how you built a friendship, whether it was with a kid, an adult, or even an animal:

How to maintain a friendship:

Maintaining a friendship includes being a good listener, spending time together, helping each other, and giving encouragement when needed. What can you do today for a friend?

When to set limits:

All relationships need limits. There must be mutual respect, honesty and independence. For example, you shouldn't do something that you know is wrong just because your friend wants you to. You can do things for your friend, but your friend must do things for you, too. Decide what you will or will not do to have a friendship with someone (and then stick to it):

How and why a friendship may end:

One of the biggest reasons that friendships end is because of change. It may be abrupt or gradual. Moving to another town, changing interests, and growing up are some examples of change. Can you think of someone you used to be friends with? How did it end?

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

Here are three friendship games. Two of them are reprinted from a past issue out of popular demand. The last one will help break the ice with a new friend.

1. People of the Mountain:

This game is similar to King of the Mountain. But, in the old game, one person got to be the king of the mountain by having to push everyone else away.

In the newer version, everyone tries to see how many people they can gather on the mountain together. One person gets on top and holds onto another, who holds onto another, and so on.

Try to bring as many people as possible with you before everyone falls down.

2. Sardines:

This is a funny, new version of Hide and Seek.

The person who is IT is the one who hides.

Everyone else counts to 100 and then goes to look for IT.

Whoever finds the IT person, must join him/her by sharing the hiding space.

Keep going until everyone has found everyone.

This game works best in places where there are lots of nooks and crannies. It then becomes fun to jam everyone into one hiding place.

3. Getting to Know You:

Make up index cards & place in a deck with the following questions on them, and have each person in a group pick one to answer:

What is my favorite food?

What is my favorite thing to do?

Do I dare tell one of my secret dreams?

If I had a chance to meet a politician or a celebrity, who would I choose?

What scares me the most?

What do I like to spend money on?

If there is one thing I could change about my school, what would it be?

What do I want to do with my life (at least for now, anyway)?

If I had a chance to be on a TV show, which one would it be

What type of books do I read?

What's my family like?

If I had to do community service for a project, what would I choose?

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