

# MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

## CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions to ask your student this month.

- ▶ Do you have someone you consider your “best” friend?
- ▶ What are some qualities you look for in a friend?
- ▶ What are some ways you are a good friend to others?
- ▶ What do you think is the best way to handle a disagreement with a friend?



## BEING A GOOD FRIEND

As children mature, friends become more and more important. In middle school especially, children start to understand what they look for and value in a friend and begin to form long-lasting friendships. Their social lives will become increasingly important over the next several years.

Although your child is becoming more independent, you can still be there to guide them in developing and maintaining healthy peer relationships. Share the following tips with your student:

**Be trustworthy.** Never talk about friends behind their backs, always strive to be honest, and be someone your friends can trust and depend on.

**Be a good listener.** Be there when your friends need to talk. When a friend is feeling angry, sad, or overwhelmed, try to understand why they feel that way, and be willing to listen and offer advice.

**Be loyal.** Friends stick together and stick up for each other, even when it’s hard.

**Solve problems together.** Even the strongest friendships have disagreements, and that’s okay. Good friends work together to find a solution.

## TALK ABOUT IT!

Middle school students can be hurtful. If your child experiences rejection or is teased by peers, listen, be supportive, and talk to your child about how to best deal with the situation.

## TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Middle school students strive for independence from their parents, while seeking group acceptance from their peers.

At some point, your student may be tempted to do something they know isn't right in order to "fit in," such as being mean to another student, doing something they aren't allowed to do, or participating in risky behaviors.

- ▶ Talk about peer pressure, and encourage your child to tune in and listen to that inner voice that tells them when something isn't right.
- ▶ Practice with your child various ways to say "no" to something they don't want to do. Remind your child that they always have a choice, and that they can come to you for help without judgment.
- ▶ Students with a positive self-image are better able to deal with social situations and peer pressure. Provide a loving, stable home environment, and spend time with your child to help them develop a strong sense of self.

## SEL SPOTLIGHT: SOCIAL AWARENESS

One aspect of social awareness is the ability to understand the perspectives and feelings of others. Here are a few tips to help your child develop these skills:

- ▶ Encourage your child to regularly take time to be alone with their thoughts, and to think about how their actions that day may have affected others.
- ▶ In your home, always be open to discussing and labeling your own feelings and emotions.
- ▶ When conflicts arise with a friend or classmate, encourage your child to practice empathy and try to understand the other person's perspective.

## FAMILY FUN: MAKE FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS

Middle schoolers love to make gifts for their friends. You can turn this into a fun family activity by making friendship bracelets together.

- ▶ Take your child shopping, and allow them to choose the materials they would like to use to make the bracelets. Embroidery floss is popular and inexpensive, but other options include beads, charms, and small rubber bands.
- ▶ Have your child search online for a video tutorial, and follow it together step-by-step. Make an evening of it—order pizza and play some music while you work.
- ▶ Your child may not want or need your help, and that's okay. What's most important is that you spend some time together, try something new, and that your child looks forward to sharing the finished product with friends.

