

## PARENTING MATTERS: **FRIENDSHIP**

▬ 4TH & 5TH GRADE - BOYS ▬

### LIFE LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE...

A herd of boys and an ever-empty kitchen. The rowdy gang that's been running through your yard the last few years now requires a little more space and a lot more food. The root of their friendships is competition, in everything from grades to video games to athletics. These boys thrive on the opportunity to test their skills against their peers and find where they excel.



# YOU PARENT THEM WELL WHEN YOU...

## KNOW:

Peer pressure is in full swing, which means boundaries are very important. They need these boundaries to prove that they are safe. Boys main form of communication is outward and will often be very physical. When they are comfortable and feel safe, they will have personal conversations with their close friends. Know that active play and competition likely frame a lot of how they communicate and who they communicate with.

## EXPECT:

Most boys in this stage love games with rules that have a clear way to win. Their play usually includes a little teasing, and some debate over cheating, and a testing of their abilities. Intellectual and physical skill is admired and respected, while being picked last or being left out can be traumatic. Expect them to start to stick more and more to the things that they excel at and avoid areas in which they struggle.

## PREPARE:

Everything can be a competition. Some people are wired to take losing harder than others, and this will become increasingly evident. Conversations with friends and teammates may get heated if someone feels they've been let down. Prepare to model what healthy conflict resolution and gracious losing looks like. Commit to the idea that nothing is a loss if you've learned from the experience.

## TALK:

Boys in this stage are usually not quick to open up. Look for ways to get involved in your sons interests and use that as a catalyst for conversation. Start up a conversation over a game of catch, on the car ride to practice, or in other casual settings. They are more likely to open up when they don't feel intimidated or interrogated as they might in an across-the-table style of conversation. Make sure you are checking in consistently with each other as parents, and with other influencers in your child's life as that will give you a more well rounded picture of your son.

## ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

In this stage, it may start to feel like you don't know know your son anymore. His hormones are kicking in, his competitive side is amping up, and he's connecting to the world and processing emotions differently than before. Be intentional in staying in touch with who your son is at his core.

### Get to know him

Know his friends and interests. Ask genuine questions. Don't judge, instead make an effort to learn more about what he cares about.

### Share physical affection

Boys still need hugs, high fives, and maybe even kisses on the head. They may seem awkward about these things, but it's important for their endorphins and neurological development to have physical contact.

### Protect their hearts

Keep an eye on chats with friends over phones, video games, etc. Be alert and on the lookout for inappropriate content and have conversations when needed.

### Set boundaries

Clear and logical boundaries make a huge difference at this stage. They will fight against you and claim to hate rules and boundaries, but too much freedom leads to unwise decisions and a feeling of being ignored or unloved.

### Keep them active

Encourage them to exercise regularly as a way to release aggression, to engage in teamwork, and to stay healthy. Try varying the type of activity they do to keep their interest and play along with them when you can.

## ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

### *James 1:19-20*

My dear brothers and sisters, take not of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

As boys deal with hormones that make them prone to emotional outbursts it is important to help them understand why God warns us to be cautious in this area. When we are quick to anger we can irreparably harm friendships. Hurtful words may come out that we don't really mean but are impossible to take back. We may become labeled as mean or bullyish and friends may distance themselves. Learning to take a deep breath and take a moment to ask God to help us calm down and either step away or choose wise words will help to protect those friendships.

## RESOURCES...

### > Web

*Pbs.org*

*Parentingscience.com*

*Verywellfamily.com*

### > Books

**The Friendship Factor: Helping Our Children Navigate Their Social World- and Why It Matters for Their Success and Happiness** by *Kenneth Rubin*

**The Unwritten Rules of Friendship: Simple Strategies to Help Your Child Make Friends** by *Natalie Madorsky Elman*

**Growing Friendships: A Kids' Guide to Making and Keeping Friends** by *Eileen Kennedy-Moore*

**The Survival Guide for Making and Being Friends** by *James J. Christ*



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