

PARENTING MATTERS: FRIENDSHIP

— MIDDLE SCHOOL - GIRLS —

LIFE LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE...

An endless barrage of comparisons. Girls start to realize varying abilities, talents, economic standings, cliques, and physical development and they use those to create a social hierarchy. They feel the pressure to climb this ladder, which often means stepping on their friends to get there. The lows will be drama amplified by hormones and the highs will be late night conversations fueled by excitement and belonging.



YOU PARENT THEM WELL WHEN YOU...

KNOW:

Change these days is rapid and inevitable. From day to day, or even hour to hour, friends, interests, crushes, and favorites will change. Know that while drama seems like everything to them, they need you to keep the big picture in mind. Their attitude is highly influenced by all that's going on around them. They need a consistent person who will take the good and the bad and love them no matter what.

EXPECT:

Emotions are all over the place in this stage. Some of it is hormonal, but a lot of it is because middle school is legitimately really, really hard. Your daughter is under a pressure that is way more intense than what you likely experienced. They are being constantly berated with all the ways that they don't measure up and reminded of the things that they are excluded from. Expect to have your great days look more like normal days and your bad days look a little worse than you're used to.

PREPARE:

The key for you in this phase is to listen, not to solve. This will be counterintuitive as your job up until now has been to protect and help them. They no longer need you to solve their problems, they need you to listen to them process and vent, and to give them space to navigate on their own. Ask questions that help them better understand the situation, their emotions, and how they can seek resolution. Prepare to take a back seat in your daughters conflict, unless they are being hurt, hurting others, or hurting themselves.

TALK:

Work hard to connect with your daughter, with each other as parents, and with other influencers in your child's life. Parenting isn't only a family matter, it includes a network and community, and that's a good thing. Ask your student about their best friends, their friend groups, how their friends and classmates make them feel, and what they admire about their friends. As you chat with them, point them towards the bigger picture. Remind them that their friendships are valuable, but their confidence and self-identity are more important.

ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

Connect Genuinely

Create a safe space to be together. Do this on their terms, not on yours. Ask what they are interested in and find a way to participate with them. Ask a few questions, but don't interrogate them. Allow space for them to teach you and to lead the conversation, be ready to learn and listen! You can do this by taking a class together, hosting a girls night, cooking or baking their favorite food, anything helps you connect over their interests.

Be the Host

Model what healthy community can look like. Become the influencer for your student's friends by networking with the parents and opening your home and your family. You can do this through conversation, but you should also be doing it by actually hosting! Text the other parents, make the chips and queso, stock the cooler, and bring the students to you. When you set yourself up to steer this ship, you make yourself an influencer in the lives of your student and their friends.

ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

Romans 12: 12-16

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another.

Parents, you model to them what friendship looks like, so follow a Biblical model of friendship and hospitality. Children take their cues from you, so be intentional to show them what healthy relationships that focus on presence, bringing peace between people, and patience when things get hard. Pray for friends to come into your children's lives that help push them towards Christ and family friends who can help raise up your children with a heart for hospitality.

RESOURCES...

> Web

Surviving Middle School Drama – Search Washingtonpost.com: *Middle School Turmoil*

Understanding Middle School Friendships –

Search PBS.org: *Understanding Middle School Friendships*

Search Huffingtonpost.com: *What Middle School Girls Need to Know About Friendship*

Bullying – Search YouTube.com: *Ways to Stop Bullying (includes worksheet)*

Jealousy – Search YouTube.com: *Dealing with Jealousy*



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