

## Social Life at the Middle School

We can all agree that middle school life is like a roller coaster. Some of you may have had a similar experience when you were in school, some of you may have not. There is no perfect formula to relationships and friendships at the middle school. At school, students learn processes, formulas, and problem solving steps to tackle any type of classroom assignment. However, in a relationship there is no perfect formula that says if you do this, this will happen. Basically, we live in a society with no absolutes. We try to teach and apply some concepts like: treating people with respect, being kind, and following the Bear Way. Nonetheless, students come with their own set of values from home and research supports that a child's home life is the foundation for their emotional, cognitive, and mental development.

A simple truth we would like students to understand is that it is **OK** for friends to change. A change in friends does not mean that someone is a failure. I know this is a difficult truth for a student at middle school to digest. Most students struggle with this concept, due to their emotional level of development. However, it is a truth that rings true the rest of a student's life and that is: Life is full of change; be flexible.

Parents help your child be flexible. Help your child to look forward and move on instead of trying to force a relationship that is already over. The truth be told, many times those relationships resurface later, which is another reason to not let your child dwell on lost friendships. Students changing friends daily, weekly, and monthly is a regular occurrence at the middle school.

Here is a classic example of middle school life. Students come into the school counselor's office and share they are in conflict with a friend or group of friends. We do a little mediation and find that both sides are at fault. Options are discussed and proposed. Usually someone is left out of a group or the students don't want to be friends anymore. We decide this is OK; let's let people move on. One student is usually a little more emotional about the outcome than the others. A common occurrence after this meeting is that a week later they are all back to being friends. Crazy middle school life!

The example above becomes very emotional and difficult for students. As a parent your heart aches for your child; however, this where we need to be careful about parental involvement. By teaching a child to work through this issue, you help the child build life-long skills problem solving skills. Trying to solve the problem for

your child negates the child's opportunity to learn these valuable skills. Parents, please make a wise decision in your approach to the dynamic of student relationships and friendships at the middle school.

