

Maintaining Positive Relationships

Presented by Jen Ripley, District Behavior Specialist
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Review: Fill their attention bucket

- Time spent with each child individually
- The child chooses the activity
- No electronics/devices during this time
- Aim for 10-15 minutes, twice a day to start
- Give your 1:1 time a name
- Can schedule into the day



Additional info for 1:1 time

- More effective if done by all caregivers in the house
- Recommended for all children of all ages
- Get creative with ideas- have your kids help come up with a list of ideas



Benefits of Family Meetings

- Bonding experience
- Improves communication skills
- Builds self-esteem (gives a sense of significance)
- Used to clarify expectations
- Celebrate accomplishments
- Opportunity to teach one another
- Opportunity to resolve problems
- Builds a commitment to family time



Family Meetings

- Done weekly and consistently
- Should be quick
- Use an agenda
- Give everyone a job
- Use a talking stick or other item if needed
- Collaborative problem solving
- End with a family fun activity



Family Meeting Sample Jobs

- Note taker
- Snack person
- Snack server
- Facilitator
- Time keeper
- Peace keeper



Sample Family Meeting Agenda

1. Appreciations/Compliment/Sharing of a positive experience
2. Calendar
3. Review of past solutions
4. List items for sharing, discussion, or problem solving
5. Family fun activity



Collaborative Problem Solving

- Become solution focused
- Pick 1 to 2 problems to solve together
- Respect each other's ideas
- No judgement
- Write down all of the ideas
- Role play



Sibling Relationships

- Schedule 1:1 time
- Remove competition from the family by playing cooperative games instead of competitive games
- Don't dismiss negative feelings, acknowledge feelings of both kids
- Help children channel hostile feelings appropriately
- Stop hurtful behavior
- Avoid comparisons
- Treat children as individuals
- Avoid putting children into definite roles
- Model behavior you want to see (clear expectations)
- Teach, encourage, and practice problem-solving and negotiation
- Encourage cooperative behavior



Play With Friends During The Pandemic

- Important to maintain relationships
- Decide what your family is comfortable with
- Clear expectations



Positive Digital Relationships

- Sit and talk with your child about the use of technology
- Set clear expectations
- Model appropriate use
- Role play



Middle School

Think back to your middle school days...

- puberty
- shifting friendships
- flirting
- changing classes
- fashion

at the same time -

- academic expectations are
 - increasing!



Schedule Changes!

Middle schoolers ...

- go from one class, one teacher
 - multiple teachers
 - multiple classrooms
- **150 new peers/day!**

empathize - a small container (elementary classroom) has become a big maze (middle school campus)!

- Students may feel more vulnerable...lots of peers/potential friends daily.
- High priority
 - **acceptance, rejection, perceptions.**



Middle School Friends...



- **Provide support for each other during transitions**
 - Physical change - puberty
 - School changes - school climate/larger school/schedule changes
 - shifting away from parents towards peers
- **They help each other develop an identity/sense of self**
 - (in relation to one another) For example:
 - She likes theater club and I like swim team.
 - We are good friends -- we both like hanging out, pizza, and biking to school.



UCLA Research - Fall/Spring Shift



2/3 of students starting middle school

Began shifting friendships between the fall and the spring.

Early fall -- they often stay with familiar friends from elementary.

Later in year - expand their horizons.

make new friends who have similar interests

...middle schoolers' interests/identity develop more in middle school...

(Denworth, 2020)

Shifting



After Fall/Spring - the “shifts” are still happening, we see it all the time!

“The constant thing about Middle School is that nothing is constant!”

- Stanley School Counselors can help!
- **Parents - please reach out**
 - **if you sense students are stressed.**
 - **counselors help ease challenges with friends!**



Take heart -- research found (APA, 2020):

- **Some students may simply take longer to adjust**
- **make friends less quickly,**
- **or perhaps connect with adults on campus quicker at first and then catch up!**



Middle School Research Study

- **UCLA Study -**
 - “shifting friends” is normal cycle (Denworth, 2020)
 - it happens in middle school based on common interests.
- However, shifting is distinguished from bullying.
 - Bullying is most often status-driven in middle school and occurs repeatedly, over time.
- Friendships are based on support, reciprocity, common interests.
- **Parents - please reach out to counselors!**
 - **contact us immediately if your child reports experiences with bullying.**



Being a good friend

One or more reciprocated friendships help adjustment in Middle School.

American Psychological Association (2004)

How can parents support middle schoolers with making friends virtually?

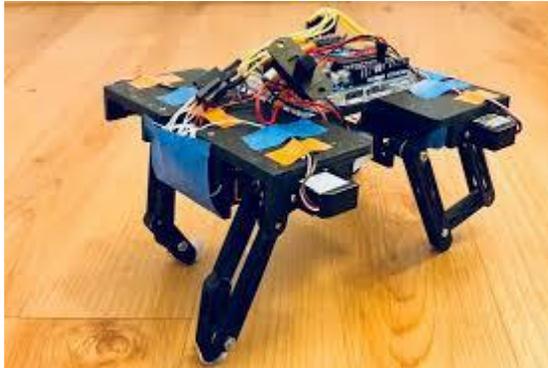
Resource: The Wildcat Weekly!!!

1. **Clubs at Stanley (virtual!)**
2. **PTA Events** such as Movie Night (look for PTA page/announcements)
3. **Help your student attend virtual activities** especially those that encourage similar interests, but also some that mix it up too!

Parent Tip!

Help your student find new interests as they begin to meet/interact with new people!

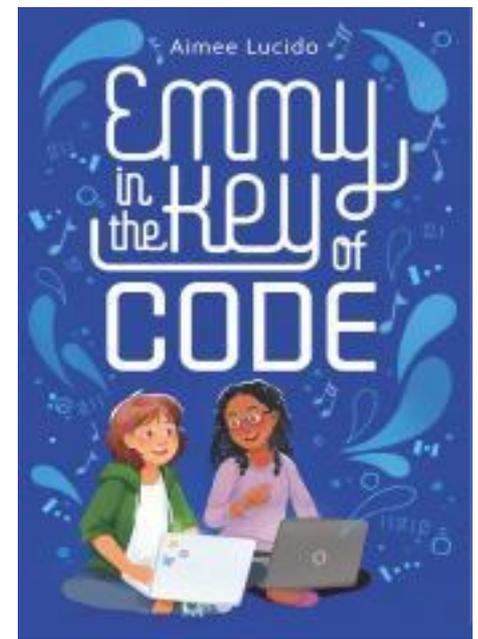
Encourage/organize access to: socially distanced activities, and/or virtual activities such as: robotics, cooking, band, art.



Clubs on Zoom -

a place to focus your interests
& make friends

- Challenge:
- Breakout rooms, lunch-breaks = students may feel
- uneasy on Zoom!
- **Parent Tips! Ways to support your middle schooler virtually**
 - **Look for clubs (Wildcat Weekly)!**
 - **Help students to attend clubs that look interesting to them.**
 - **Encourage them to exchange phone numbers** and call new friends “old school” afterwards -- to avoid Zoom fatigue!



Overall benefits of reciprocal friendships...

Enjoyment and support!

Gain locus of control internally,

Feel more secure at big new school

Reduce stress/fear of judgement

Develop cooperation, sharing, helpfulness.

(Denworth, 2020) (APA, 2020)



- **Parent Tip! Remind students that with a true friend, you can be yourself -- plus the other person thinks of you as a friend too :>!**

FRIENDSHIPS

Healthy

✓ Supportive

✓ Stands behind you

✓ Encourages you to grow

✓ Pushes you outside of your comfort zone

✓ Transparent and Honest

Unhealthy

✗ Blindly supportive

✗ Fights your battles for you

✗ Criticizes or judges

✗ Pressures you to do something you don't want to do

✗ Manipulative and Deceitful

Parents can help students be good friends...

Encouraging/modeling positive behaviors...

Research shows - students often

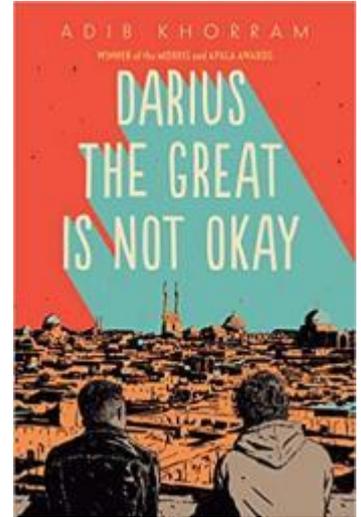
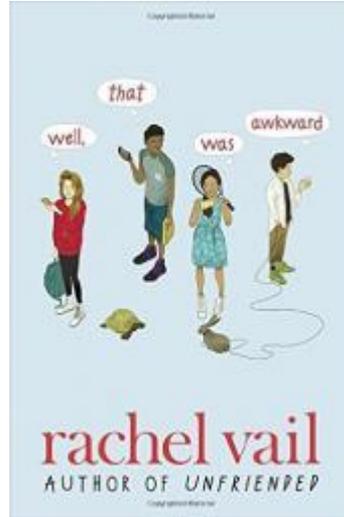
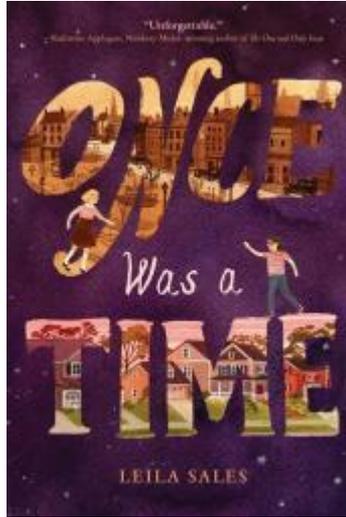
- increase prosocial behavior when their friends are doing this!

Positive friend group behavior ->

- predictive of more positive behavior later
- in middle school and on into high school (Denworth, 2020)



Books about friendship from Common Sense Media



Last but not least



- **Continue being present for your student.**
- Your presence supports them as they move away from you and towards their friends.
- **Listen (without an agenda)**
 - (so hard for me as a mom!!! -- sometimes I do better with my own child when driving or folding laundry at the same time as listening).
- **Make time to “just listen.”**
- **Try not to fix.**
- **Allow students to “just be” -- to get things out, let stress go.**
 - Book: *How to Talk So Teens will Listen and Listen so Teens will Talk.*

References

American Psychological Association (2004). *Friendships ease middle school adjustment*. Retrieved 9/10/20 from: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/julaug04/friendships>

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