

INVITATION TO FRIENDSHIP

Think back to who your best friends were in elementary school. Who were they? Does that thought bring back good or bad memories? I know I can remember those people and all the crazy times we had in school. I still have not forgiven one friend for always getting me in trouble when I was ten years old! Enough about our memories, your child is building significant friendships this year and we want to help you navigate that issue this.

This year we are inviting your child to see the power of friendship. Why this year? Being ten years old is a huge marker in friendship development for kids. For the first time many children form a deep relationship with a “best friend.” For the first time many keep secrets from their parents that only their friends know about. Some of your children are going to secretly notice that boy or girl across the room and not really know what to do about it. Also with technology at their finger-tips many kids can now stay in contact with friends outside of school through texting. This is the year to process the power of friendship with your child.

The biggest influence in a child’s life is their parents. The second greatest influence comes from their circle of friends. Friends shape our child’s story so it is so important to help them choose wisely.

10-YEAR-OLD ACTIVITIES

Ten years old is the peak year for relationships. Many ten-year-olds are beginning to express interest in the opposite sex. Your child is beginning to listen to their peers. Many children this age develop an intimate relationship with a best friend. We can be wise in helping our children choose their friends well since friends are the biggest influence in the life of a child after parents.

ACTIVITY 1: ART OF FRIENDSHIP

We want to help you present your child with a piece of art that signifies who they are as a friend. Ask several of your child's friends and friends' parents and/or family members to give you 2 to 3 words that describe your child. See the sample message below as a point of reference for making this request. Then use these words to create a piece of art for your child's room. Depending on how "artsy" you are, you can personally make this item, hire a professional, or pay a talented teen to do your child's art piece. Here are several ways you can create art using the words:

1. Words painted on canvas
2. Words etched in wood
3. Words sketched on paper and framed, calligraphy or graffiti art
4. Use a collage frame and put pictures of friends as well as words into the frames
5. Decorate a poster board with the words
6. Words seared into metal/iron

There are tons of options for making this cool piece of artwork that is sure to be special to your child. Designate a time to give your child the gift. At the scheduled time you can use the planning guide script as a guide for the presentation.

MESSAGE FOR FRIEND'S PARENTS

Dear _____,

We are doing a special project for our son/daughter. We'd love your feedback since your child and our child are friends. Can you please ask your child to tell you 2 or 3 words he/she would use to describe my child. We're going to use these words to create a cool gift for him/her because we've been talking with them about friendship. Thanks so much!

FRIENDSHIP PRESENTATION SCRIPT

You are such a great friend. We've talked about friends showing loyalty, showing respect, and giving encouragement. I've seen you do these things with your friends, and I'm very proud of you. Through doing these activities together we've seen the qualities to look for when choosing a friend and the kind of friend to be to others. I asked your friends to give me a couple words that describe you, and this is what they come up with. We created a piece of art for you so that you can remember what your friends think of you, and remember the kind of friend God wants you to be. This is what your friends said:

(Read the words to your child.) Hopefully, this piece of art will remind you to be a good friend by being loyal, showing respect and giving encouragement. These are the traits that God wants us to have in our friendships.

ACTIVITY 2: ENCOURAGEMENT IN FRIENDSHIP

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us,

“So cheer each other up with the hope you have. Build each other up. In fact, that’s what you are doing.”

As a friend we should be building up others or encouraging them. This is a good time to help your child think through his/her friends. Is there someone in his/her life who isn’t encouraging. If so, take this opportunity to help them see that a good friend is one who encourages and builds up.

Encouraging words build people up, they make them strong. Think of a brick wall. Each brick stacked with another and another will eventually create a strong wall. Ask your child to think of a close friend and write his/her name or draw a picture of him/her on top of the bricks. Have them write encouraging words about their friend in each of the bricks, what makes him/her special, what does your child appreciate about that friend, etc. For some kids it may be super awkward to give this to their friend. However, if your child is brave enough, have them go for it. It’s not often that we take the time to tell people why they are special to us. This could be a significant start of transparency and honesty in your child’s life.

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY 10 YEAR OLD?

The biggest change in development for ten-year-olds is the change in friendships. All of a sudden, they care what others think of them and want to fit in. Your child probably has at least one very close friend this year that they enjoy spending time with. Here are some of the developmental changes they are experiencing right now.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your ten year old may:

- Attempt to resolve conflict before involving adults; understand that not everyone views things the way they do
- Are no longer egocentric
- Have a high level of emotional intensity
- Can be self-critical
- May worry

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Are ready for competitive and cooperative games
- Are physically maturing (Girls physically mature faster than boys.)
- May engage in habitual movements like nail biting, hair twisting, etc.

RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Gravitate toward certain friends
- Need encouragement
- Begin to care about social issues
- See adults as fallible, realizing their inconsistencies
- Have a strong desire to fit in
- May begin to show interest in opposite sex

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- Are concerned about being right or wrong and being fair
- Have a strong tension between being a child and pushing toward independence
- Benefit from some freedom to exercise their growing independence
- View fairness and justice as big themes in their lives