



PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of fourth-grade students

The Social Fourth Grader

Friends and Fights

"I'll never talk to Emma again! We're not friends anymore."

Sound familiar? Your fourth grader may be going through some bewildering ups and downs with friends. Getting into quarrels with other children isn't unusual for this age child. The arguments may be intense and wild but are usually brief. Learning to manage anger, control temper and limit quarreling is a gradual process. You can help by teaching and modeling clear communication, problem solving and compromise. Children learn from their personal experiences and by watching others.

Watching your child lose their temper or struggle with handling emotions can be difficult. If you can remain calm during these stormy times, you will help your child learn to work things out peacefully. The experience of arguing with others is usually a lesson in understanding that his or her world consists of many different people with a multitude of ideas. Experiencing the consequences of elementary school quarrels ultimately can help your child develop self-control.

Expanding Friendships

During this year, people outside the family may become increasingly more important to your child. They are apt to become more deeply attached to best friends and be more selective about them. As your child's interests and acquaintances expand, they may choose friends you don't know.



Your child and their companions are learning that they can be friends and still have different ideas and customs.

Stress Less Activity



Stress is part of everyone's life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Teach gratitude by:

- Taking turns stating three good things that happened in your day.
- Making and using a gratitude journal.
- Writing grateful for you notes and thank you cards.
- Giving people genuine compliments.

These activities reduce stress and add joy to the life of the sender and the receiver.

If your child wants to spend time with a new friend, arrange a get-acquainted visit between the two families. Realizing how important these childhood friendships are to their child sometimes is difficult for parents. If families cannot get together, invite your child's new friend to your home. This will allow you to meet and get acquainted.

Most often, you will be able to see very quickly why the children enjoy each other. If you have concerns, this initial visit allows you to see what is happening so you can discuss what is troubling you, as well as your family rules.

You may find a child who seems notorious for the explosions that occur every time they are with your child.

You may feel that this companion should be barred from your child. Yet consider what your child may or may not learn from such a decision. Rather than keep your child from that playmate, help the child know how to handle situations that arise. When together, you will want to be sure the children are monitored closely so things are less likely to get out of hand.

For example, Jack was a fairly quiet youngster, but whenever he was with Devin, they became very mischievous. Jack's mom was understandably disturbed by his behavior. She decided to keep a closer watch and make sure they had a variety of approved but exciting things to do when they were together. This eliminated most problems. Many children are very active and imaginative at this age but can lack the judgment skills needed to make good choices about appropriate behavior.

If you can spell out clear ground rules for your child and his or her companions in a calm, light and friendly way, you are apt to be successful in keeping his or her good will as well as holding his or her behavior within your boundaries.

If another child's behavior is extremely troublesome, you may wish to intervene and give the child a helping hand. Once the two are separate again, help your child review what happened. You might even set up a signal for your child to ask you for help when they get into questionable situations. Most children will make wise choices when given understanding and support from an adult.

Your child has a lot to learn about how to get along with all kinds of friends. Through their day-by-day work and play with all people, your child slowly is gaining knowledge that will help them be successful in relationships throughout their work and family life.

Don't be alarmed by this new interest. Be open and discuss relationships in a straightforward manner. This is not a time for teasing or mocking. That behavior confuses and may embarrass children. This is an important issue and requires listening and respect.

If your child has problems making and keeping friends, they will need your help and support. Remind your child this is a learning process and that a good friend forgives and tries again.

Challenge to Parents

This is an exciting year in your child's growth and development. Your child and his or her companions are learning that they can be friends and still have different ideas and customs. This is a major step in thinking. They also may question you about a variety of family beliefs, customs and traditions, or about your likes and dislikes, food preferences, fears, wishes, religious beliefs, values and more.

As your child explores these questions, you have the opportunity for important communication. Take the time to visit and explore this expanding world with your fourth grader. **Your child's basic values are being established between ages 8 and 10.** Take these opportunities to share your perceptions and beliefs.

You can't rescue your child or fix his or her problems forever. Take the time now to talk about the dilemmas they are facing. Ask in a caring way, how behaviors lead to certain consequences. These are important opportunities that you won't want to miss!



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