



MBES

Counselor's Corner

Coping with Cliques

Having friends is important in a child's development because it helps prepare them for relationships they will have as adults. In groups of friends, the members are free to hang out with others without worrying about being excluded from their friendship group. These friendship groups don't have to do everything together.

Cliques are different from friendship groups in the fact they are usually controlled by a leader. This leader can decide who is "in" and who is "out". The members of the clique usually do most things together. In cliques, there can be a lot of rules, rejection, and pressure. Generally, cliques are their most intense in middle and high school, but they can form as early as 4th grade.

How can you help?

- ❖ Talk about your own experience with cliques.
- ❖ Discuss social dynamics and how people are often judged by the way a person looks, acts, or dresses. Sometimes people act mean because they lack self-confidence and other times it is because they want to be in control.
- ❖ Find stories they can relate to in books, TV shows, and movies. Point out where the characters remain true to themselves and how they handle difficult situations.



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❖ Foster relationships outside of school. Get your kids involved in extracurricular activities to create another social group. If you notice that your child is becoming part of a clique it is important to address it right away. Try to find out why your child wants to be a part of the clique – they may fear rejection by the clique and want to join in order to avoid that feeling. Keep in contact with your child's teachers and school counselor to get their perspective on what is happening in the classroom and at school.

Encourage Healthy Friendships

- ❖ Encourage your child to find people with similar values and interests to befriend.
- ❖ Keep social circles open and diverse – model this with your own friendship circles.
- ❖ Encourage your kids to speak out and stand up when others are being bullied or cast out.
- ❖ Remind them that a true friend respects their interests, opinions, and choices even if they are different.

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