



Riverside School  
Princeton, NJ

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## Riverside School Counseling Newsletter

### First Friends, an article by Jen Klein

*Recently, I came across this article from regarding friendships in elementary school. Author Jen Klein does a wonderful job illustrating the challenges parents face as our children navigate friendships during their primary school years:*

As our kids grow, so do their friendships. From the early years of parallel play next to the neighbor's kids to really making friends on their own, learning about friendship is a long, windy path - with a few rollercoaster-like hills thrown in every now and again. Helping our kids learn to navigate the ins and outs and ups and downs of friendship during the elementary school years can be tricky.

In our children's early years, they have lots of supervision and guidance to teach them basic skills, such as sharing. But the older they get, the more time they are spending with friends out of direct ear shot, if not direct visual sight. At school, at sports, even a church, there is much that happens between and among friends that we do not see. It can be hard to make sure that what is happening with your child and his or her friends is appropriate. That said, we can continue to influence and affect our children's friendships.

#### **GUIDING**

While we may not be able to guide every friend interaction as our children move through the elementary school years, we can continue to talk to our children about their friendships, coach them through interactions, set up safe environments for our children to interact with their friends and get to know those friends (and the parents) ourselves. This level of involvement and communication allows us to see the dynamic of particular friendships - and see when friendships are really positive and when they may become problematic.

If a friendship does have a miscommunication or the dynamic becomes an issue for any number of

reasons, choosing how to help your child deal with the issues can be tricky. Your child needs to learn how to handle many of these friend dynamics on their own. Letting Mom take care of everything isn't always the way to go. Coaching your child through situations, even role playing some responses, can help your child figure out the best way to manage their own friendships.

#### **NOT EVERY FRIENDSHIP LASTS FOREVER**

We as adults know that not every friendship lasts forever, and it's sad and sometimes hard for us to accept that as adults. Imagine for a kid! Whether by natural attrition of attention and change of interests or a specific event, some friendships don't last.

Helping your child through the end of a friendship can be one of the most heart-wrenching things a parent does. It's a kind of grief that must be processed, not dismissed; your child's hurt is real! "Oh, you'll find another friend," is as hollow sounding to your child as it would be to you. Letting the grief run its natural course while trying to direct emotions constructively - and communicating to remind your child of the terrific friendship skills he or she does have - can help both of you get through it.

Friendships are a beautiful part of life, and learning about friendships and how to be a good friend can be a life-long process. Fostering healthy friendships in your children's lives, and helping them get through challenging periods with friends is part of parenting. It's not always easy, but if you and your child approach friendships with the idea of being the friend you want to have, the joys likely will far outweigh the challenges.



## Website Reminder

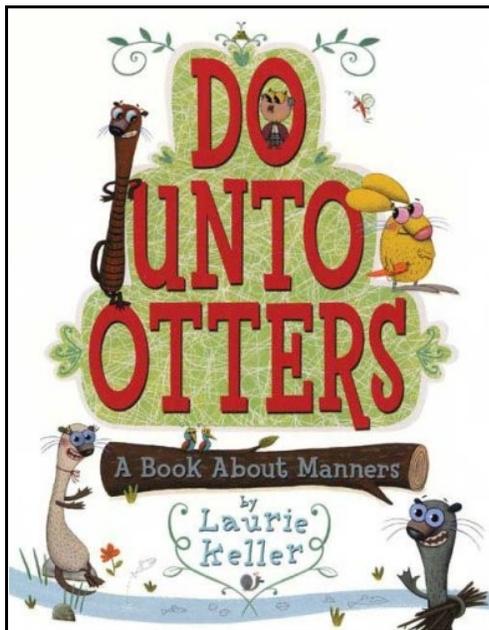
Just a reminder about the PPS School Counseling Department's anti-bullying website, <http://www.PRSUnited.com>. The website features distinct and detailed sections covering the bully, the bullied (or the victim) and the bystander. Each section contains strategies, resources and videos.

There is also a mini-section dedicated to the ever-growing problem of cyber-bullying. The website features links to our district's Anti-Bullying Policy, HIB referral form, and information on where to go and what to do if there is a bullying situation.

## Book of the Month

### ***Do Unto Otters*** **by Laurie Keller**

Mr. Rabbit's new neighbors are Otters! But he doesn't know anything about otters. Will they get along? Will they be friends? Just treat otters the same way you'd like them to treat you, advises Mr. Owl. In this book, author Laurie Keller highlights how to be a good friend and neighbor - simply follow the Golden Rule!



## Helpful Websites

### **Kids Reads**

<http://www.kidsreads.com>

This website shares reviews of "cool new books" and authors. The books are categorized by age and by genre. There is a link for podcasts and another for book clubs. The newsletter highlights the newest and best on the site.

### **Great Dad**

<http://www.greatdad.com>

This website bills itself as the only online parenting resource with a dads' point of view. Read up on tips and news on better parenting for your kids of any age, because "dads don't always think like moms!"

### **Kidspace**

<http://www.kidspace.com>

A great site where kids can play fun games and learn at the same time! A great way to extend your child's learning.

## Important Dates

### **December 22 - January 1**

Winter Recess

### **January 21**

No School

### **February 4 - 8**

National School Counseling Week!

### **February 15/18**

No School

## About Mr. Samara

Ben Samara is Riverside's School Counselor. He is available to answer any question you may have about your child's academic, emotional or social progress.

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