MindPeace

FRIENDSHIP MATTERS SERIES

Fitting In vs. Belonging

Helping kids handle peer pressure and cliques

For families · Grades 3–12



Wanting to belong is normal, especially for teens, whose decision-making skills are still growing. Cliques run on status and who's in or out. Help kids find the right fit, not just fit in.

Six ways to build real belonging

1 Saying no is okay

Even to friends. Practice simple ways to turn something down.

2 Choose kindness

Lasting respect comes from being kind and fair, not from being "popular."

3 Spot fake friends

Notice when a friendship is one-sided or always on someone else's terms.

4 Keep interests

Sports, art or volunteering build confidence and new friend circles.

5 Respect limits

Boundaries go both ways: their own and other people's.

6 Include others

Close friends are fine; excluding isn't. Ask how left-out kids feel, and address teasing right away.

Helpful reminders

- Kids who put others down are often feeling insecure themselves.
- Social scenes change fast. Your own school stories can help kids see that.
- Books, shows and movies make easy, low-pressure conversation starters.
- Teachers and counselors can share what they see at school and what support is available.

Sources

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