

# OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

*Handling the hurt of being an outsider*

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**DURING A MIDDLE-SCHOOL ASSEMBLY**, a student asked if I'd ever experienced being on the outside looking in. He said that he was in that position and needed advice.

While I've never had the desire to be in a group that did not seem to welcome me, I have walked with many teens who carried the hurt of feeling like an outsider. These strategies can help.

- 1. It can feel intimidating to walk into a crowd.** Having someone to hang with gives a sense of security. However, be prepared to make yourself comfortable wherever you go. Carry a puzzle book or novel. Engage in an interesting activity. Then initiate conversation with the person next to you. (Respect people over things!)
- 2. Though comforting to belong to the "in group,"** it stunts your individuality when you take your identity from a group and let other people tell you how to think and what to do. Take opportunities to develop your personality as well as new interests or hobbies. Join outside-of-school activities. Speak to other students. Volunteer for tasks at school.

- 3. Develop conversational skills.** Do not monopolize the moment. Instead, show interest in what other students are saying or doing. Ask someone to teach you a skill or to work with you on a fun project/task.

- 4. At recess or lunch time, carry a deck of playing cards** (such as Uno, Crazy Eights, or Rummy) and invite other students to play. If balls are permitted, start a Four Square group. Become an entertainment initiator.
- 5. Outside of school, invite one student at a time to join you for a leisure activity.** Observe how the other person reacts or responds to you. You'll learn what personality traits are attractive and what tendencies are counterproductive to friendship. (We all have both kinds.)
- 6. Cultivate a PPEP personality:** Be positive, purposeful, enthusiastic, and proud!
- 7. In order to have a friend, you must be a friend.** What qualities do you like to see in other people?

## Student Questions

- Why do teens hang around with groups that make them feel like outsiders?
- Why do you think teens let others tell them how to think and act? How do you think it could be stopped?
- Do you think if everyone lived PPEP that no one would be on the outside looking in? Explain.

Cultivate those qualities within yourself.

- 8. Turn the hurt of exclusion into an opportunity** to develop skills that would not develop if you limited yourself to "in group" activities. **I**

Send your questions and suggestions to SR. PAT at [DrPatMcCormack@aol.com](mailto:DrPatMcCormack@aol.com).

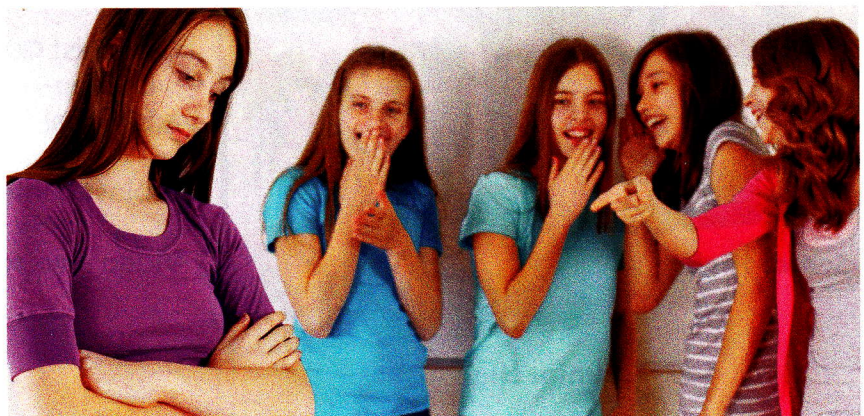


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