



RELATIONSHIP READINESS

Navigating changes

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DURING MIDDLE SCHOOL it can seem like everything about you is changing — because it is! Your body, brain, and emotions are changing. Probably you are more sensitive or even moody, and more self-conscious, reluctant, and reticent than you used to be. Possibly you feel inferior to others, believing that just about everybody else is more capable than you — or maybe you are tempted to squash your uniqueness because you do not want to stick out in the crowd.

Peer opinion, approval, and criticism cause pressure. Most teens experience anxiety involving relationships with peers of both sexes. Convert stress into usefulness! Discover and develop your personality by honing five specific relational skills:

1. Develop your personality.

Young children and immature people live in a world of “me, myself, and I.” That attitude does not win

Student Questions

- Have you ever been a part of a “me, myself, and I” situation? What lessons can you learn from it?
- What do you keep in your spiritual pocket?
- Have you ever been in an awkward situation and didn’t know how to respond? What skills could help you handle an awkward situation in the future?
- How will you treat people differently after reading this article? Explain.
- In what ways can students stop peer pressure?
- How have God’s signs helped you to discover your strengths and weaknesses?

friends or cause teams and groups to seek your membership; neither does negativity, a critical attitude, or a boring spirit.

Strive to be positive, purposeful, enthusiastic, and proud. Keep your promises. Put effort and energy into everything you do. Safeguard confidences. Avoid gossip. Be welcoming and show interest to all students.

2. Identify your strengths and weaknesses.

Scripture says, “All fulfillment has its limits” (Psalm 119:96). Don’t waste energy by pinning to be something other than what you are. Who you are and the talents you possess are a gift from God, and God does not make mistakes!

Support others whose skills, interests, and accomplishments are different from yours, and devote your energy to developing your strengths and compensating for what you perceive to be weaknesses. Foolish people miss out on their infinite potential by obsessing over the gifts of others.

3. Build conversational skills.

Know what interests your audience. Learn about those topics, or at least create a few sentence starters about

those topics as well as general conversation starters. Carry your starter thoughts in your “spiritual pocket” so you can initiate conversation. Listen carefully so you can repeat or refer back to topics in the future. Express admiration for or interest in what other people are doing.

4. Treat people as expressions of God.

All persons are precious gifts of God, made in God’s own image — *Imago Dei*. People are not objects to be used, misused, abused, or discarded.

5. Learn to name your emotions.

Give a specific title to your feelings. Only then will you be able to understand why you feel badly and be able to handle emotions in a healthy way. Dr. Michele Borba provides a list of emotional vocabulary words that may help you (see bit.ly/EmotionalVocab).

Practice these things now, and you will grow into a healthy, happy, well-formed teen ready for all the good things that high school offers. **T**

Send your questions and suggestions to SR. PAT at DrPatMcCormack@aol.com.