

One Question You May Not Want to Ask Your Child

“How are you?”

If you read my last three blogs, you’re beginning to understand that this question that we are often asked, and that we ask our children, isn’t simple.

If your son answers while thinking of his intellectual identity, he might answer “Great!” But, if answering with his emotional self in mind, he might have said “Lonely” or “Frustrated.”

If your daughter thinks of her emotional identity, she might answer “Terrible!” But, if answering while reflecting on her intellectual self, she might have proclaimed “Super!”

Maybe the internal contradictions are why children often just grunt, shrug their shoulders or respond “OK.” And this is only while considering two of six identities!

Today, let’s consider the social identity. No matter the age of your children, this matters. It’s about friendship, being friendly, community, establishing belonging and being connected in meaningful ways.

What goals do you have for this identity for your children? What do you hope they’ll strive for? Talk with them about your hopes and goals as another school year begins. But, do more than talk. Help them. Model for them what’s healthy. Be available for their questions. Share wisdom. Dry their tears. Be vulnerable about your past struggles. Identify missing skills and teach them. Think strategically and plan intentionally. Progress is very possible!

As in my past blogs, I’ll share here what groups of 7th-

graders listed as a high compliment when I taught this concept to hundreds of them back in June. Perhaps this will help you think about how to present this issue to your children and how to choose important goals:

- Teamwork
- Friendly
- Outspoken, friendly
- Nice, helpful
- People like being around me
- Outgoing
- A lot of friends, interactive, open, trustworthy, compassionate, fun to be around, respectful, perky, responsible
- Outgoing, funny, friendly
- Nice, kind, optimistic, caring
- Optimistically outgoing
- Good at talking to people
- Self-control
- Funny, easy to get along with

I wish I could follow up with the five groups who listed “friendly.” If your children answer with this goal, I hope you’ll follow up. What do they mean by the word? What’s the evidence that someone is friendly? What does it look like and sound like?

I’ve been observing people from afar. It’s been interesting. I’ve assumed someone is friendly based on body language, facial expressions and how closely they sit next to someone. Am I right? Could I be wrong?

If you ask your children what “friendly” is like with peers they don’t know yet and what it’s like when they know peers well, I’d love to know what they say. Be prepared for an interesting discussion. I’ve been observing my own behavior at church, for instance. I’d like to be known as being friendly. How do I present myself to guests? How do I present myself to

those I'm already friends with?

There's much to think about! Again, the question, "How are you?" isn't as simple as we used to think it is. {eoa}

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