

Counseling Corner

What To Do When Your Child Feels "Nobody Likes Me"

from the American Counseling Association

"I hate school..." "I don't have any friends..." "Nobody likes me..."

Many parents have heard those words or something similar. During the pre- and early adolescent years it's a common experience for children to sometimes feel left out and isolated in the school environment.

The reasons for such feelings are simple to understand. For many children, the age of puberty and early adolescence brings significant issues in the development of the child's self-concept. This is when children begin to develop an identity of their own, one apart from their parents. Peers become more important and their opinions often carry more weight than what Mom or Dad has to say. At the same time, physical and emotional changes that are a normal part of development may have a child feeling insecure and even scared.

Then, if your child isn't part of one of the more popular groups of students, the feeling of insecurity can often manifest itself in that feeling that "nobody likes me." While such insecurities are a normal part of growing up for many children, they really can affect academic performance and, certainly, your child's level of happiness.

For a parent, this is a time that requires special patience and understanding. Simply telling your child he's incorrect about how other children view him doesn't work; he doesn't want to be told what to think. He most likely will simply give you back that old stand-by of the teen and pre-teen years, "You just don't understand."

Despite such reactions, it's important to continue to give positive, reassuring feedback. Listen to what your child is saying without being critical or judgmental. Try to be supportive and indicate that you understand.

Situations like this are a good time to talk with your child's school. School counselors are trained not to tell a child what to think, but to assist him or her in learning how to think. The counselor can also help you better understand what your child is going through and assist your child in seeing that not being popular with a particular group of students is not the same as "nobody likes me."

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at counseling.org

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