

POP-UP CONVERSATIONS

My Kid Is Struggling to Make Friends

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Intro: Welcome to our Pop-Up Parent Conversation! We're so grateful for your presence, and for investing your time in this hour-long guided conversation on behalf of your kids. Today we're going to dive into a topic that really tugs at Mom and Dad hearts--the struggles our kids are having with friend relationships. We asked Dr. Daniel Emina, a child/adolescent and adult psychiatrist, and the Associate Medical Director of Amen Clinics, to offer us a 10-minute introduction to how friendship struggles impact our kids, and some things to think about as parents who love them. Let's watch... *(Or share the video with parents ahead of time, so that they can come together and discuss what they saw.)*

Dr. Daniel Emina (Video - 10 minutes): Walking with your kids through friendship struggles.

Ask (5 minutes): First, what are your initial reactions to what you just heard? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

Say: We are living in a time of profound loneliness. U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has named it an epidemic: "Loneliness isn't just an uncomfortable feeling; it's dangerous to us as individuals and as a society." Because we are created in the image of God, we all have a deep longing for connection—for close community with friends. Consider this: God is a "we"--Father, Son and Spirit--and so our deep need for relationships is rooted in God's nature.

Let's Talk (Pairs or Trios - 15 minutes): We're going to split into pairs or trios now for a 15-minute conversation, then we'll gather back together to debrief what you talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we'd like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you're leading this online)*

- **How have you and your family experienced the impact of the "loneliness epidemic?"**
- **How have you seen the impact of friendship struggles on your kids, and how are they coping with it?**
- **How have you tried to help your child, and what's happened as a result?**

Debrief (Whole Group - 7 minutes): Gather back together and **ask:** What stuck out to you in your conversations, and why? What were similarities you found in your children's friendship struggles, and how were the stories different? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

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Say: In parenting, it's easy to slip into "fix-it" mode with our kids. Subtly and unconsciously, we can start to see them as problems that need to be solved—right? With this issue, it's especially important to realize how our own stories impact our concerns for our kids. Maybe sharing our own perspectives on friendship struggles will help give us perspective on our kids. Dr. Emina hinted at something in his overview that we're going to explore to end our time today...

Let's Talk (Trios - 10 minutes): We're going to split back into Trios now for a 10-minute conversation, then we'll gather back together to debrief what each Trio talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we'd like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you're leading this online)*

- **From God's perspective, it's no accident that *you* are the parent of your kids—your parenting is a calling. How have you experienced God leading you through your own relationship struggles?**
- **Our callings always draw us closer to God--how has God "shown up" with you and your child in new ways through these relational struggles? How can you help your child see God's care for them in their relational lives?**

Debrief (Whole Group - 7 minutes): Gather back together and **ask:** What's something you heard, or said, in your Pair/Trio that offers real help for you as you parent kids struggling with relationship issues? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

Closing Prayer Exercise: Ask each parent to say this short prayer for someone else's child. God, _____ is YOUR child. Help him/her to know how much he/she is loved.