



# Introduction

Have you noticed that your life seems to be getting more complicated? Maybe you feel confused or worried one moment, then thrilled or excited the next. It might even seem like you're on an enormous roller coaster. You may not be sure how you got on or how to get off, but you know there's no turning back now.

Welcome to the middle school years! Like a roller coaster ride, this time in your life has ups, downs, twists, turns, and sudden starts and stops. Sometimes you may wonder how you can possibly hang on . . . but at least you're not on the ride alone.

## 2 Too Old for This, Too Young for That!

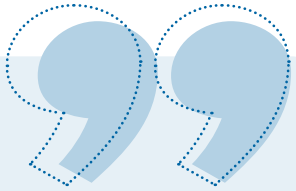
Why is middle school so different from elementary school? Because practically everything has changed. Not only do you have more teachers, subjects, homework, projects, and tests, but you might also have a homeroom, a locker, more clubs and activities, and other new things to handle. Your friends and classmates probably don't look, act, or dress the way they used to. What you talk about together may be different, too. Everyone might now seem a lot more concerned about who's coolest, cutest, or most popular.

Life at home may also be changing. Parents\* might suddenly make more rules and give you additional chores. Maybe you feel like adults at home often treat you like a kid, even as they say they want you to act more grown up. You're not a child anymore, but you're not grown-up either. You're in between, and sometimes that's a hard place to be.

If you're between the ages of ten and fourteen, changes are happening to you inside and out. You probably don't think, feel, look, or act like you used to. During these years, you might:

- grow about two to five inches and gain around five to fifteen pounds per year (which is completely normal but can feel totally weird)

\*This book often uses the word *parents*, but the information in it can be helpful whether you live with one or two parents, another adult relative, a stepfamily, a foster family, or other people. When you see the word *parents*, you can think of the adults who are responsible for you.



“During my first day of middle school, I couldn't even find the boys' bathroom, let alone my locker and all my classes. But in a day or two, I started to adjust.”

—Tim, 14

“I was so happy to start middle school. It's exciting. I have more freedom and more fun.”

—Christina, 11

“Middle school is about changing a lot—friends, school, even me. I grew four inches this year!”

—Carlos, 13

- mature more quickly or slowly than other kids (which is normal, too)
- notice pimples erupting on your face, hair where there was no hair before, and other embarrassing things
- feel excited yet scared about puberty and all the changes that come with it
- worry a lot about making friends, having enough friends, being popular, or finding a boyfriend or girlfriend
- be lost, bored, confused, or frustrated in school
- feel sure that no one on earth understands you

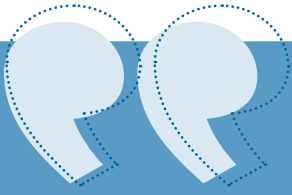
With so much happening all at once, who wouldn't feel a little overwhelmed?

The middle school years are unpredictable, but they're also exciting and filled with possibility. You can use this time to:

- explore your talents
- strengthen your skills at school and in athletics and other activities
- learn to understand and deal with your emotions
- build lasting friendships
- form better relationships with the people in your family
- set goals and find ways to reach them
- make plans for your future

The middle school years are a time when you're figuring out who you are and who you want to be. (This is a lifelong process, by the way, so don't worry if you don't figure it all out.) You'll become more of an individual, with your own point of view, and you'll start to find new ways to express yourself—through your activities, schoolwork, clothes, and hobbies. You're also old enough to decide how to spend some of your own money, go more places with friends (without your parents), and choose which activities to pursue. You get to do more and be more, and this is the fun part of the middle school years.

## 4 Too Old for This, Too Young for That!



“In middle school, hanging out with your friends is really important. I have great friends.”

—Sophia, 12

Middle school can be a really terrific time in your life, but it has its rough moments, too. We wrote *Too Old for This, Too Young for That!* to help tweens and teens overcome these challenges and make the middle school years the best they can be. The book is orga-

nized around seven Survival Tips that cover every part of your life: family, friends, feelings, body changes, school, and making choices. Up-to-date information answers questions you might have about getting older. You'll also find quotes from real middle school students, quizzes to explore interests, advice for tough times, and fun activities you can use to take charge of your life.

Maybe you're wondering what two adults like us could possibly know about middle school. The answer: plenty. We survived it, just like you will, and we remember what it was like. We know how it feels to be too shy to raise your hand in class, even though you definitely know the answer. Or to be embarrassed beyond belief if your parents pick you up at school and don't wait in the car like you asked them to. We know about getting glasses or braces just when you least want them. Or having a crush on someone who doesn't even know you're alive.

Our entire careers have involved helping tweens and teens handle the changes that come with getting older. Over the years, students have shared with us their experiences, feelings, problems, mistakes, successes, and dreams. This book brings together what we have learned, and now we hope it helps *you* navigate the challenges of middle school.

Feel free to contact us with questions or comments. You can write to us at this address:

**Harriet S. Mosatche**

**Karen Unger**

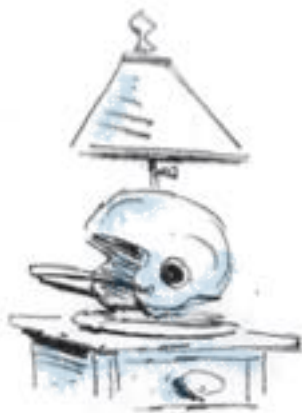
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**P.S.** A thirteen-year-old we know once said that life as a middle school student is fun because you have “more freedom, privileges, and responsibilities.” We couldn’t agree more that life during these years can be great. There’s a lot to look forward to, so enjoy the ride!



## SURVIVAL TIP #2



# Like the Skin You're In

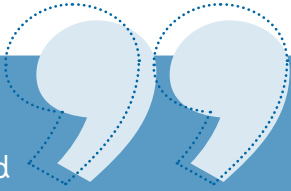
Because the middle school years include a lot of physical changes, most tweens and teens begin to think more about appearance than ever before. Feelings about looks can change from day to day, or even hour to hour. You might have doubts about how you look or even worry that appearance determines your worth as a person. But that's not true. How you look is only a small piece of who you are. You are also made up of your heart, mind, personality, thoughts, and feelings. That's not to mention all of the other unique things about you, like accomplishments, interests, experiences, talents, and dreams. If your outside package starts to seem all-important, it can help to remember all of these other great things about you. **Survival Tip #2** has many other ways to learn to like the skin you're in.

# Give Yourself a Self-Esteem Boost

Self-esteem is a measure of how you feel about yourself. If your self-esteem is strong, you can face challenges with a positive attitude and bounce back quickly after mistakes and disappointments. You believe in yourself and your ability to succeed, and that means taking positive risks and setting realistic goals. When you're proud of yourself, you feel comfortable feeling good about someone else's accomplishments, too.

On the other hand, if your self-esteem is weak, you're more likely to take negative risks and set unrealistically high or low goals. Because you don't value yourself enough, you may go along with the crowd just to fit in and feel accepted. And you may want others to fail because you think that might make you feel better about yourself. But it won't.

Having healthy self-esteem comes both from how people treat you and how you treat yourself and others. When people who matter to you show they care about you, that's a self-esteem booster. So is being treated with kindness and consideration by those you love. You can also raise your self-esteem by treating yourself and the people who are important to you with care and respect.



"I hate it when people think I'm ten years old just because I'm short."

—Annie, 13

"I didn't care about appearance until sixth grade, but now I spend a lot of time on how I look."

—Manny, 14

"I'm excited about getting braces this year. I can't wait to get rid of the big gap between my two front teeth."

—Natasha, 12

TIPS

## Avoiding Self-Esteem Sinkers

To keep your self-esteem healthy, you'll have to watch out for the Self-Esteem Sinkers. Don't let them pull you down!

- **Worrying about what other people think.** It takes a lot of energy to imagine what everyone's thinking of you. The real question is: What do you think of yourself?
- **Comparing yourself negatively to other people.** Remember you're unique. You can look and do things your own way.
- **Expecting to be perfect.** No one is perfect, so why try to be? You're human, which means you'll make mistakes. Learn from them, forgive yourself, and move on.
- **Playing the "I'll be happy when . . ." game.** Have you ever told yourself, "I'll be happy only if I make the team" or "I'll finally be happy when I earn an A+" or even "I can't be happy unless I get this DVD/shirt/cell phone/bike"? This is one game you can't ever win. It's a lot easier to feel happy when you appreciate what you *have* instead of worrying about what you *don't* have.

Believing in yourself can be a big challenge during the middle school years. Research shows that between the ages of ten and fourteen, many people experience *shrinking* self-esteem. This can leave tweens and teens questioning their decisions, abilities, and smarts. If this sounds like you, you might need a self-esteem boost. Here are some fun ideas to try:

**Create a list of things that make you proud.** A list like this can help remind you that you're a valuable person. Your list might include accomplishments you are proud of, unique things about you, special things you have done for others, or anything else that makes you feel good about being you. Any time you want to boost your self-esteem, read through the list or add more items to it.




**Practice visualization.** Go someplace private, close your eyes, and imagine a quality you'd like to have (or one you already have but would like to strengthen). For example, maybe you'd like to be more confident, artistic, or brave. Now imagine—or visualize—a scene in which you're showing this quality. Perhaps you'll envision yourself confidently taking a test, painting an amazing picture, or doing a trick on your skateboard. Visualization means you start with imagination and end up with a better image of yourself. You can do this any time to feel more optimistic about the future.

**Set goals.** If you want to achieve in life, start by setting goals. It's best to focus on achievements you know you can reach if you really work toward them. When you reach goals, don't forget to reward yourself and take time to recognize the progress you are making. (You can learn more about goal setting on pages 158–159.)

**Be physically active.** Activity does more than get you in shape—it also helps you feel good. Strenuous activity that gets your heart rate up releases endorphins (brain chemicals) that give you a happy, relaxed feeling. Experts say people who are active on a regular basis feel better about who they are.

**Learn to stand up for yourself.** You'll feel better about yourself if you know how to express your opinion and let your voice be heard. You don't have to allow other people to take advantage of you, tease you, or push you around. Sticking up for yourself can be a challenge, but the more you do it, the easier it gets!

**Look for inspiration.** You can find meaningful stories and quotes in books, magazines, and online. Keep reminders of these inspiring words and actions where you'll see them—like your desk, bulletin board, or mirror. You can also write about them in a journal or on your blog.



“When I’m feeling down, I go skateboarding. No matter what’s bothering me, I feel a lot better after taking a ride on my board.”

—Richard, 13

## CHECK IT OUT

*Be Confident in Who You Are* by Annie Fox. Check out this book for graphic-novel stories and advice on feeling good about who you are.

### It's My Life!

[www.pbskids.org/itsmylife](http://www.pbskids.org/itsmylife)

This site features helpful information and advice for getting older.

## Stay Positive

Another way to feel good about who you are is to use positive thinking. Scientists have shown that thinking positive thoughts can help people feel better about themselves and be more successful in life. Unfortunately, a lot of people—including many middle school students—get in the habit of negative thinking. Maybe some of these thoughts sound familiar:

"I can't do anything right."

"What if I mess up?"

"No one likes me."

"I hate how I look."

"I'm not good enough."

Negative thinking and negative self-talk can lower your self-esteem. When your head is filled with negatives, you're less likely to take risks or achieve what you want. (Because why try anything if you've already predicted you'll fail?) Then, when you do fail, you probably tell yourself, "See, I knew I couldn't do it." This is known as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You have the power to turn around many situations by thinking about them positively. The next time you're facing a challenge, make an effort to listen to the voice in your head. If you replace negative words with positive ones, you'll notice a difference in how you feel. And with practice, you'll get better at seeing yourself—and your life—in a brighter light. That's known as the power of positive thinking!



## TRY IT

## Finding Positive Thoughts

Situation	Instead of:	Tell yourself:
<b>Before a test</b>	"I know I'll fail."	"I'll study hard and do my best."
<b>During class</b>	"If I say the wrong answer, they'll think I'm dumb."	"I'll give it my best shot. If I get the answer wrong, I'll find out why."
<b>If you make a mistake</b>	"I can't do anything right."	"Mistakes are a chance to learn."
<b>When you meet new people</b>	"They won't like me."	"We may have a lot in common."
<b>Before the school dance</b>	"No one will dance with me because I'm not cute enough."	"If I go with my friends, we'll have fun. Plus, I can do the asking!"
<b>When a friend or family member encourages you to try something new</b>	"I'm going to look bad if I can't do it right."	"It will be fun to learn a new skill."
<b>If your plans get canceled</b>	"Now I'll be bored the rest of the day."	"Maybe someone else can hang out."

From now on, every time you hear that negative “inner critic” saying something that sounds like it came from your worst enemy, substitute different words. Replace negative thoughts with the kind of praise you might hear from a close friend or someone who really admires you. That’s positive self-talk in action!

## Feel Good About How You Look

Positive thinking can be a powerful tool to help you feel good about who you are. It can also help you feel better about how you *look*. With all the changes that go along with puberty, it’s not surprising that middle school students often find it hard to feel comfortable in their own skin. Staying positive is one way to help you feel less awkward or anxious.

Still, it can be hard to feel confident about appearance. The middle school years are a time when looks can seem really important. People may talk a lot about who’s cute, or cool, or well-dressed—and who’s not. It might even seem like being attractive is all that really matters in life, which obviously isn’t true.

### FAST FACT

Staying positive can make you feel better about who you are and help you accomplish goals.

But that’s not all. Positive thinking has also been shown to benefit overall health, possibly even fending off the common cold! People who are optimistic are better at handling stress than those who are pessimistic (or negative).

## SURVIVAL TIP #4



# Connect with Your Family

In middle school, family relationships are changing. Parents\* might like music, movies, or activities that seem weird or boring to you. Maybe they do embarrassing things, like hug or kiss you in front of your friends. It might seem like *parents* are suddenly different, but more likely what's changing is how you relate to each other and get along. Although you still need your parents, you're more independent now. As you pull away, they might try to pull you closer or have a hard time letting go. Sometimes your relationship with them might feel like a tug-of-war. You may be pulling at different ends of a rope, but there's still a connection between you. That's what **Survival Tip #4** is all about: staying connected!

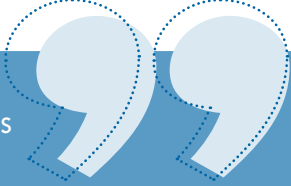
\*When you see the word *parents*, you can think of the adults who are responsible for you, whether that is one or two parents, another adult relative, a stepfamily, a foster family, or other people.

# Keeping Open the Lines of Communication

Communication with parents often becomes more difficult during the middle school years. That's because you've entered a new stage of development. You now have more opinions and ideas, and different needs. You probably want to be part of adult conversations and family decisions. You're older and you'd like your voice to be heard.

Adolescence is the time when you begin to establish your own interests, and your likes and dislikes. That's part of figuring out who you are (your identity). You may also be discovering ways you're different from your parents. Some conflict with your family is bound to happen as you work on your own identity.

Although you love your parents, you may now have doubts about their rules and how they run things at home. Having occasional disagreements is normal. But in some families, arguments happen often and ordinary conversations can turn into battles. Family members may say



“My mom is so busy it's hard to have good conversations with her.”

—LeShawn, 11

“My two younger siblings are both greedy for attention, and I get left out.”

—Rissa, 14

“Even when I do my best to speak politely, my stepdad says I'm acting out or being difficult. He gets mad at me instead of listening to what I have to say.”

—Alex, 13

“My dad doesn't seem to ever listen; he always seems kind of preoccupied. And my brother always wants the attention all on him. I feel like no one notices me!”

—Julie, 12

hurtful words or have trouble talking. Communication problems make it hard to get along.

To make matters more difficult, you're at an age when you may not be comfortable showing affection for parents. They may see this as a sign that you don't care about them or need them as much as you once did. (Even if you don't really feel that way.)

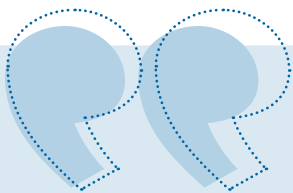
## 7 Ways to Get Along with Family Members

Even though disagreements are a normal part of family life, communicating honestly and openly can be helpful in resolving conflicts. Here are some tips to try:

**Use I-messages.** These are statements that rely on the word *I* to communicate. For example, "I feel angry when I get yelled at" or "I feel that you sometimes treat me like a child, and I want to show you how responsible I can be." Instead of placing blame on the other person, I-messages focus on feelings and help defuse tense situations.

**Speak in a calm voice.** Talking calmly and politely shows respect for your family and gives you a better chance of being heard. If you scream, your parents will probably react to your tone of voice rather than to what you're saying. Showing respect can help you get respect.

**Say what you mean in a direct way.** Gather up your courage, and then make your point or ask your question. If you're worried about hurting someone's feelings or not getting the answer you want, remember that I-messages are a helpful way to communicate. Try again, using *I* to start off each sentence.



"Sometimes my dad says I have a bad attitude—even when I'm not doing anything wrong."

—Marceline, 12

**Be aware of what others feel.** Everyone has a point of view, so let each person have a say. Suppose your parents make a rule about not letting you hang out with your friends on school nights. Consider your parents' point of view.



Maybe they think you won't get your homework done if you're spending too much time with friends. Show them that you understand this, and they'll be more likely to listen to your side of the story.

**Be open to a little give and take.** One way to solve a problem is by compromising—each person gives a little to get a little. Using the previous example, what could you do to compromise? Suppose you make sure your homework is done before you go out with your friends, and you agree to be home before 8 p.m.? That may be a solution everyone can agree on.

**Pay attention to body language.** Body language is a way of communicating without words. Suppose you yell at your dad, and he asks for an apology. You say you're sorry, but cross your arms and roll your eyes. What your dad "hears" is, "I'm not a bit sorry!" Be aware of your facial expressions, your gestures, and your posture. Also, try to make eye contact to show you're paying attention.

**Work on listening.** During a disagreement or conversation, people sometimes tune each other out. Or they focus on what they're going to say next. Learning to listen takes practice and patience. But other people feel they're being treated with respect when they know you're really listening—and that makes them more likely to listen to you.



**CHECK  
IT OUT**

**It's My Life—Family**

[www.pbskids.org/itsmylife/family](http://www.pbskids.org/itsmylife/family)

Visit this website for helpful advice on getting along with siblings and adults at home.

***What's Up with My Family?*** by Annie Fox.

This book features graphic-novel stories about being part of a family and real-life advice that can help make life at home better.

## SURVIVAL TIP #5



# Find, Make, and Keep Friends

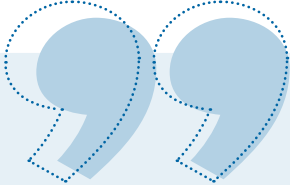
Friendships are very important during the middle school years. You might already spend a lot of time hanging out with friends, texting, playing video games, or participating in sports and other activities. These fun experiences can really strengthen friendships. But the middle school social scene also has challenges. Starting at another school might mean a lot of new faces in class and at lunch. Friends sometimes abandon one another to hang out with a more “popular” crowd. Cliques often form and exclude or tease nonmembers. These situations can all be tough to deal with, but **Survival Tip #5** can help. It’s all about finding, making, and keeping good friends—skills that can help you now and in the future. You’ll also find info on dating, another part of middle school life you may be wondering about.

# What's Friendship All About?

When you were younger, you probably made friends with the people in your neighborhood. But now you're older, and many things in your life have changed. You have new interests and activities, and more freedom to do what you like to do. At school, you may change rooms to attend different classes, instead of staying in the same room all day long. You're probably meeting more people now, which gives you lots of opportunities to make friends.

## Making Friends

Making friends is all about getting to know new people. If you're naturally kind of shy, you may find it harder to make friends. But, you'll find that building friendships can get easier with practice. And one simple piece of advice can take you a long way: Be yourself. You don't need to put on an act to get people interested in you or make them think you're popular. Real friends like you for who you are.



"I have kept most of my friends from elementary school, but I see a lot of new groups in school. Sometimes the groups change one day to the next day."

—Amir, 12

"Before, everyone played together in a big group. But now, people hang out and some kids don't want to hang out with other kids so you have to think about your friendships more."

—Matthew, 11

"Making new friends in middle school isn't that hard. You just start talking to people in class or at your locker or on your team and then you become friends. But you have to have something in common to stay friends."

—Shana, 13



CHECK  
IT OUT

**Boy Scouts of America**

[www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)

Check out this program for guys to get involved in camping trips, outdoor adventures, and service projects in the community.

**Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.**

[www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org)

Activities available from this organization for girls explore topics ranging from sports to science and service to careers.

**Get out and about.** A friend isn't going to magically show up at your door! Find out what's going on in your neighborhood and community. Is there a sports team you can join? A local recreation center you can check out? Maybe a community-sponsored club? What do people nearby do for fun?

**Join in at school.** Participating in an after-school activity is a great way to get to know people. What are your interests—drama, writing, art, athletics, community service, computers, music? Plenty of activities are available in middle school. Figure out what you like to do, and then get involved.

**Be friendly at school.** You may be surprised at how quickly other people respond to a smile or friendly hello. To break the ice, you could ask someone for the homework assignment or say something about a teacher or class. After the other person responds, try to get a conversation going. Ask questions and act interested. Most people like to talk about themselves and appreciate it when someone listens.

How can you tell if someone is a potential friend? You'll feel a connection to the person. Maybe you have a lot in common—you like the same jokes or activities. Sometimes you and your friend might be

very different—one of you may be more athletic, and the other more social. But you admire each other’s positive qualities, and together, you complement each other.

If there’s someone at school you’re interested in getting to know, invite that person to do something fun. Shoot some hoops, go for a bike ride, or just sit together at lunch. Have a party and invite people you’d like to get to know better. Soon enough, you’ll receive invitations in return.

**TIPS****Fun Things to Do with Friends**

What do you like to do with your friends? Maybe you spend a lot of time hanging out, using the computer, playing video games, or just texting. Want some new ideas for fun things to do? Here are a few to try:

- Learn a new sport or musical instrument together. You could start a band.
- Join an after-school club together or start a club your school or town doesn’t have.
- Volunteer on a project that helps your community.
- Plan an outdoor party with different games and lots of food.
- Start a business together. You could wash cars, do lawn work, make crafts to sell, create greeting cards, take care of people’s pets, or find other ways to earn money.
- Start a book club. Choose a book to start with and see that everyone in the club gets a copy from the library or bookstore. Meet to talk about what you’ve read.
- Join a new club or youth group, such as the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, or Boys and Girls Clubs.

## Being a Good Friend

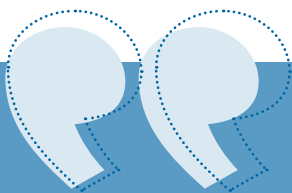
Are you a good friend? And how can you tell? Ask yourself if you're . . .

**Dependable:** Do you call when you say you will? Are you on time when you and your friends make plans? Do you keep secrets a secret? Are you there when your friends need help or advice?

**Loyal:** Can your friends rely on you to stick up for them? Do you make them a priority in your life?

**Supportive:** Do you cheer on your friends in every effort? Do you listen? Do you point out your friends' positive qualities? Are you kind and helpful?

**Considerate:** Do you take into account your friends' feelings? Do you make an effort to understand their points of view?



“The best friend to have is one who cares about you and will stand by your side when something happens to you.”

—Chris, 13

“A friend is someone who's kind, lets you talk, stands up for you—and shares lunch with you when you've forgotten yours.”

—Brianna, 12

“A good friend is someone you can trust 100%.”

—Jorge, 12

**Respectful:** Do you treat your friends the way you would like to be treated? Do you appreciate your friends' unique qualities?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, *congratulations!* You're a good friend, and that's an excellent quality. Maybe you answered yes to many but not all of the questions. Are you still a good friend? Sure, but you can become an even better one.

Decide where you need to improve. Can you call your friend more often? Make an effort to listen? Compliment your friend more? Consider your friend's feelings? Be

more respectful? Make an effort to do one thing (or more) each week to be a better friend.

What if a friend of yours is the one who needs to work on his or her friendship skills? It may not be easy telling your friend how you feel, but talking can help. Here's what to do:

**Agree on a good time to talk.** Find a private place where you won't have to worry about other people listening in.

**Be honest and direct.** Don't accuse your friend of anything; just calmly explain how you feel.

**Listen to your friend.** If you want your friend to hear what you have to say, make sure you're doing your part by listening.

## When You're Not Getting Along

Friendships have highs and lows. Sometimes you and a friend may be so close that you're almost like family. At other times, the two of you may feel so angry with each other that you wonder why you ever became friends in the first place. How do you keep your friendship strong when you're not getting along? Try conflict resolution.

**1. Decide what the problem really is.** Sometimes the fight has gotten so big that the people involved can't even remember what the original problem was. Or maybe the fight is hiding the real problem. For example:

Renee is hurt and angry that her friend, Ayesha, has been spending a lot of time with a new girl at school. Renee doesn't want to admit how she really feels, so instead she tells Ayesha not to bother coming over Friday night even though they had plans. When Ayesha asks her why she shouldn't come over, Renee says she just changed her mind. Now Ayesha's hurt and angry, too.

Figuring out the real problem means both sides have to be very honest about their feelings.

**2. Come up with solutions.** Think of as many as possible and make a long list of ideas.

**3. Choose the solution that both sides agree is best.** What would each person like to see happen? Is there an obvious solution?

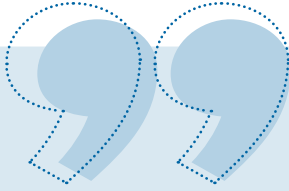
If not, is there a way to compromise? The goal here is to find a win/win solution, meaning something positive happens for both people involved. For example, consider what solutions might work in the following situation:

Evan has been taking guitar lessons, and his music teacher suggested that he join the school band. Evan decides to give band a try, but his best friend, Mike, gets mad because Evan now has band practice on Thursdays after school. That was the day Evan always came to Mike's home to hang out. Evan feels guilty, but he's also mad that Mike is acting so selfish.

Possible solutions might include:

- Evan quits the band and continues to go to Mike's house: this is good for Mike, but Evan is missing out on a chance to play in the band.
- Mike stays home alone on Thursday afternoons, while Evan's at band: this allows Evan to stay in the band, but Mike is bored on Thursday afternoons.
- Evan and Mike stay angry with each other and end their friendship: both guys lose a friend because neither was willing to compromise.
- Evan stays in the band, and Mike signs up for chess club, which meets on Thursday afternoons. The boys decide to get together on Wednesdays instead: win/win!

Now the goal is to agree to act on the solution that works best for both sides.



“Arguments are going to happen between friends, but don't let them make you forget why you like each other.”  
—Jonathon, 12



**4. Apologize.** Each person should apologize—and mean it. Forgive one another and put the conflict to rest.

**5. Use a little humor.** There’s nothing like laughter to loosen up a tense situation. After a serious conversation, it helps to tell a joke or remind each other of a time when you did something really weird or goofy. It’s hard to stay angry when you’re laughing!

## Friendship Pitfalls



You can't help feeling jealous sometimes. Maybe your best friend gets A's in all her classes but barely studies. Another friend may be very sure of himself and always know what to say to get laughs from the crowd. You, on the other hand, might struggle for B's at school and stay quiet in social situations because you're sure you'll say something

dumb. Maybe you don't want to let these things make you jealous, but you can't help it. So what to do?

Accept that it's normal to feel jealous sometimes. Just don't let jealousy eat away at you and make you hard to be around. Instead, think of the positive things you've accomplished. Maybe you recently made the volleyball team, got a good grade on an assignment, or taught your little sister how to skateboard. Thinking of your pluses can protect you from feeling jealous.

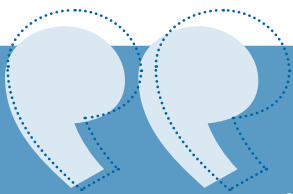
Remember, too, that if something good happens to your friend, it's a positive thing. Feeling happy for your friend is a way to show support. If you can't seem to get over your jealousy, ask yourself what's going on. Does your friend have something you want? If so, is there a way you can get the same thing? Instead of putting energy into feeling envious, set a goal for yourself and take steps to reach it. This way, you're focusing on yourself (instead of your friend) and using positive thinking to your advantage.

Sometimes jealousy is low self-esteem in disguise. Maybe you feel that you aren't as smart, good-looking, organized, athletic, outgoing, or confident as your friend. Instead of finding ways you don't measure up, think of what makes you stand out. What's unique about you? What are your positive traits? What makes you fun to be with? Take a look at pages 27–29 for more on feeling good about yourself.

Jealousy isn't the only friendship "monster" to look out for: betrayal is a big one, too. A betrayal is a break in trust, such as lying or saying something negative behind a friend's back. Betrayals cause anger and hurt feelings—and can bust up even the strongest friendships.

What if you've betrayed a friend: is there any way to repair the damage? Start by admitting what you've done and saying you're sorry.

Apologizing shows that you care and you want to make up. A good friend will probably forgive you if your apology is sincere. Make a promise never to betray your friend again—and keep that promise.



"One of my friends seems to have everything. Sometimes I wish I could trade places with her."

—Jhumpa, 11

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