



THE ART OF FRIENDSHIP

Fourth grade is the peak year for friendship in elementary school. Your child is beginning to listen to his or her peers more than ever. Many children this age develop an intimate relationship with a best friend. We can be wise in helping our children choose their friends well since friends are the biggest influence in the life of a child after parents. This Milestone Experience includes a time for you to **ENGAGE** in conversation with your child about respect, loyalty, and encouragement in friendship. At the end of this Milestone Experience, you will **AFFIRM** your child by presenting him or her with a symbol, a special piece of art you've created, that signifies who your child is as a friend.

STEP 1: PREPARE

We want to equip you to maximize this Milestone Experience with your child. First read through the full Milestone Experience Guide so you know what to expect. Then, set aside two special times with your child. One will be for a time to **ENGAGE** your child to learn what the Bible has to say about friendship. The second time will be to **AFFIRM** your son or daughter with the art piece you will present.

Before embarking on your conversation with your child, do a little prep work for the culmination of this Milestone Experience. This will save you time and allow you to create a really special moment together.

Begin emailing or texting several of your child's friends and friends' parents and/or family members to give you two to three words that describe your child. Please see the sample message as a point of reference for making this request.

MESSAGE FOR FRIENDS' PARENTS

Dear _____,

We are putting together a special project for our son/daughter. We'd love your feedback since your child and our child are friends. Can you please ask your child to tell you two or three words he/she would use to describe my child. We're going to use these words to create a cool gif for him/her because we've been talking with them about friendship. Thanks so much!

Then use these words to create a symbol, a piece of art for your child's room. Depending on how "artsy" you are, you can personally make this item, hire a professional, or pay a talented teen to do your child's art piece. **Here are several ways you can create art using the words:**

- Covertly have your child draw a self portrait and then use this to write these words around the outside of his or her drawing
- Use wordle.net to create a word collage
- Paint words on canvas or a wood pallet
- Sketch words on paper, or cut out from magazines and frame
- Use a collage frame and put pictures of friends as well as words into the frame

Now that you are prepared, set aside a time to **ENGAGE** with your child in conversation to help your child learn what the Bible says about friendship. It would be ideal to have these conversations outside of the home so you and your child will feel like this is a special time between you. You could even make this Milestone Experience memorable by setting up a tent in the backyard! What matters most isn't the location but the quality time you will have engaging your child as you help them to learn the **ART OF FRIENDSHIP!**

After your time together, you will have the opportunity to **AFFIRM** your child by presenting the artwork. We have included a sample presentation script in the **AFFIRM** section below.

STEP 2: ENGAGE

Items Needed:

1. A Bible
2. Crayons or colored pencils or a pen
3. "I want a friend who..." printout
4. "Brick wall of friendship" printout

TALK ABOUT RESPECT IN FRIENDSHIP

READ AND SHARE: Read together The Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12 from your Bible or use the scripture below: In everything, do to others what you would want them to do to you.

CREATE: Help your child fill out the attached "I want a friend who..." sheet and write down some characteristics they think makes a good friend. Have your child read the characteristics he or she listed.

Take a close look back at the characteristics your child listed and one by one ask your child if he or she exhibits these characteristics as a friend. We say we want our friends to be a certain way, but are we being that for them? Are there a couple ways that your child knows he or she could be a better friend?

PRAY: Take just a minute to pray with your child and ask God that He would help him or her to develop those traits.

TALK ABOUT RESPECT IN FRIENDSHIP

READ AND SHARE: Read together 1 Thessalonians 5:11 in your Bible or use the scripture below. So cheer each other up with the hope you have. Build each other up. In fact, that's what you are doing.

(Parent Hint: As a friend we should be building up others or encouraging them. Tis is a good time to help your child think through his or her true friends.)

ASK YOUR CHILD:

- Which of your friends encourage and build you up?
- Is there someone in your life who isn't encouraging? If so, take this opportunity to ask your child how he or she would want that friend to treat him or her. Help your child to see that a good friend is one who builds others up and encourages.

CREATE: Encouraging words build people up; they make them strong. Think of a brick wall. Each brick stacked with another and another will eventually create a strong wall just as encouraging words from others can make us feel strong. Ask your child to think of one close friend and write his or her name on the top of the attached Brick Wall print out. Have your son or daughter write encouraging words about that friend in each of the bricks, what makes the friend special, what does your child appreciate about that friend, etc. For some kids it may be super awkward to give this printout to that friend. However, if your child is brave enough, encourage him or her to give the printout to that friend. It's not often that we take the time to tell people why they are special to us. This could be a significant start of transparency and honesty in your child's life.

PRAY: End this special time with your child in prayer, asking God to help your child to not only choose respectful and encouraging friends but also to be that type of friend to others.

STEP 3: AFFIRM

Close this experience by now presenting your child with the art piece you've created. You can use this script as a guide for the presentation.

FRIENDSHIP PRESENTATION SCRIPT

"You are such a great friend. We've talked about friends showing respect and giving encouragement. I've seen you do these things with your friends, and I'm very proud of you. Through working through these Bible passages together we've seen the qualities to look for when choosing a friend and the kind of friend to be to others.

I asked your friends to give me a couple words that describe you, and this is what they came up with as a description. We created a piece of art for you so that you can remember what your friends think of you, and remember the kind of friend God wants you to be. This is what your friends said:

[Read the words to your child]

Hopefully, this piece of art will remind you to be a good friend by showing respect and giving encouragement. These are the traits that God wants us to have in our friendships."

I WANT A FRIEND WHO...



