

# Coping with peer struggles...

Over the last couple of months, I've had the opportunity to reconnect with many high school friends and acquaintances as we prepare to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> reunion at Eastwood later this year. It's a time to remember with fondness those "good old days". Given how busy our lives have become, it's understandable how easy it is to forget about those formative years, yet, as a school counselor, I am in a unique position, for I am often called upon to remember my school days as I try to assist today's students with peer concerns.

Peers and their acceptance is often what kids hold most important in their minds. A single look, word, or note from a peer can be enough to make or break a child's day, regardless of all other positives present in his or her life. By the time a child nears middle school age, the need to be accepted becomes so strong that a student may begin to change his or her appearance, interests, or even succumb to peer pressure in hopes of "being popular" or "fitting in". It is in these moments that a child needs the most guidance. When I meet with students regarding friendship issues, it is then that I am reminded of my own struggles growing up, and how those closest to me helped me to navigate the rough spots and stay on course to a bright future.

Please talk with your children about their peer concerns. It may help to know that the time will come when friends really are loyal and that they really can share common interests without fear of ridicule. In time, they will learn how to cope with rude classmates and how to stand up for themselves. Any time you can offer advice on this topic it will not go unnoticed. Your children will be listening, although they may prefer to show you otherwise.