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When moms don't play nice

Have you ever asked your kids who they play with at school?

When I did, I was a bit surprised by the answers. One of my children gave me reasons why they didn't like playing with certain kids, and the other two said they shared a very small group of friends.

I gave them the standard Parenting 101 lesson on why they should be nice to everyone and not pass judgment. I reasoned this might help them avoid some of the traumatic playground drama that develops in school.

I've noticed, however, that playground drama often carries over into adulthood.

A few weeks ago, the kids and I arrived at a birthday party already under way. Busy, happy kids played while husbands chatted and enjoyed a few cold ones around the pool. The men just enjoyed each other's company and caught up on old times.

The wives, however, were scattered about in small groups. I enjoyed chatting with each of the groups and visiting with people I hadn't seen in a while. Toward the end of the party, I noticed a few murmurs about who was talking to whom and what the other had said, but I didn't pay too much attention — that is, until the ride home.

Riley, my 9-year-old daughter, was very quiet during the drive. After half an hour, she forged the question:

Why doesn't John Doe's mommy like Suzy Q's mom?

I instantly panicked.

Another Parenting 101 moment.



When facing a tough question, respond with a question. "Why do you ask, Riley?" I said.

"I heard John's mom saying she wished she could change things, but she just didn't like Suzy's mom. She was sorry John's dad made the mistake of marrying her."

No quick answer for that one.

I tried to explain that sometimes adults make poor decisions about what they choose to say (especially in front of kids). I also explained that some parents blame others for the way they feel instead of owning their own problems.

Let me explain what I mean when I teach my kids to own their problems and not pass them off to someone else. If they have an issue with somebody, I tell them to take it up with that person, own your problem, instead of turning to a third person.

I went on to explain to Riley that if you do your part and be nice to others, if you don't join in when others talk behind people's backs or start rumors or untruths, then you don't have to own other people's negativity. If they choose to be nasty, that is their problem.

Being a leader is not always easy, but it truly is better than following someone making poor choices.

Anyone who knows me knows that when I have a problem, the person I have a problem with is the first to find out. Why talk about it with someone else? Why run it by five different people and allow them to share it with five more people? If we could only teach our kids to own their feelings, actions and the consequences that come with them, I truly think more adults would be better role models for their kids. **pc**

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