



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
for *The Unwritten Rules of Friendship*
by Natalie Madorsky Elman &
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Which of the example children in the book remind you of yourself growing up? Which remind you of your child(ren)?

Sometimes parents and children have similar friendship styles and sometimes they differ. As a parent, is it easier for you to help a child with friendship issues who is like you or one who is not like you? Why?

The authors emphasize the importance of working with rather than against our children's personality in helping them navigate the social world. What does this mean for your particular child(ren)?

The authors mention that almost all kids struggle socially in some way, at some time, and they list a number of typical but painful friendship problems: "having an argument with a friend, dealing with teasing, being excluded from a group, and trying to find a buddy in a new classroom." Has your child struggled with any of these? What did or didn't help?

When our children have friendship problems, it can arouse all kinds of reactions in us parents: sadness, protectiveness, frustration, helplessness... What emotions have you experienced related to your child's social struggles?

Why are friendships so important for kids? What do children gain from them besides fun?

The authors say, "At their core, the unwritten rules are about kindness and civility." What do you think are the biggest challenges in teaching our children to be kind?

Have you ever been in a situation where an adult didn't "get" an unwritten social rule? What happened? How did others react?

Do you think it's harder or easier for kids to make friends now compared to when you were a child? Why?

Nowadays, children tend to have much less unstructured time and much more time spent in organized activities under adult supervision. What impact do you think this has on children's friendship skills?

Discussion Guide for *The Unwritten Rules of Friendship*

As parents, we want our children to feel like they're part of a group, but we also want them to be unique and independent individuals. How has this issue of balancing belonging/conformity versus separateness/independence been relevant for your child(ren)?

The authors make a distinction between "ordinary meanness" and "bullying"? Do you think this is a useful distinction? What do you think the difference is?

Kids can behave very differently in different settings. Have you ever been surprised by something a teacher said about how your child behaves at school?

What similarities or differences have you noticed between boys' and girls' friendships?

Have you or your child ever had an opposite-sex friend? In what ways is/was that friendship similar or different to same-sex friendships?

What do you think is the best way for adults to make friends?

Nowadays we all have busy lives. How do you keep your friendships alive? How do you divide your time between new friends, who are part of your life now, versus old friends who were part of earlier stages of your life?

Do you prefer getting together with friends one-on-one or in a group? Has this preference changed for you over the years?

Sometimes conflicts between children spread to become conflicts between adults. Have you ever had this happen? How did you prevent it or deal with it?

If you have more than one child, how do you handle siblings and play dates?

How do you think electronic forms of communication, such as texting, email, on-line multiplayer computer games, and facebook, have affected friendships among children? Among adults?

Have you tried any of the activities in the book? How did your child(ren) respond? What is one idea or strategy from the book that you want to try with your child(ren)?