

The Next Chapter

This school year will mean more than new teachers....more than a new class schedule...in fact, this marks one of the most important times of your life.

This... (noticeable pause) ... is high school !!

OK, enough with the drama. But you have to admit it – this is a pretty intense change. And you probably have mixed feelings about it, which is totally natural. There are obviously things you'll miss about being in middle school. But you have to be excited about at least *some* of what lies ahead.



Expect to feel a little...HUMBLED. In your last year of junior high, you're on the top rung. You rock!! You rule!!

Well...now you're kind of on the bottom. There's nothing wrong with this – remember that even the coolest senior was once where you are now. But it can feel a little weird at first, especially when you're trying to get used to so many new things at the same time.

Just try to stay confident, and remember that you have a right – and a reason – to be here.



You may have heard about them – now you have them! They're the teachers at your high school! If you have older brothers, sisters, or friends, some teachers' names may sound familiar. But they're still new to you.

Give your new teachers a chance. Remember, they're in their jobs because they want to help you succeed in school and life. They can be great mentors and role models.

And all the rest Some other people in your school community include:

⇒ the principal ⇒ school counselor ⇒ secretaries and staff ⇒ coaches

You get the idea – there's more to your school community than students and teachers. And with every person you meet, there's a potential for a *positive* relationship.

Other parts of your new world

You'll also be getting used to...

More **ADVANCED** classes

Since you're in high school, it's logical you'll be taking a new level of academic courses. The idea is to stay challenged – and work up to your personal potential.



The class I'm most excited about is: _____

The class I'm least excited about is: _____



MORE freedom – and responsibility

In high school, you might find that someone won't always be there telling you what to do and how to do it. You have some choices.

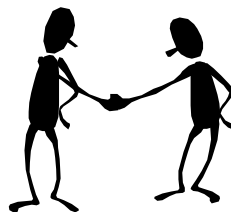
For example, you may have more time before school or between classes than you ever did. You may be able to choose subject areas in which to take more (or fewer) classes.

But with this privilege comes responsibility. These changes can feel **OVERWHELMING**. And it's totally understandable if you feel anxious or even scared. But take heart, you **WILL** get used to things.

Getting Connected...it's not all about books

Being students, becoming friends

It's a bit unrealistic to have that hit-the-mall-together kind of friendship with everyone in your own class let alone the entire much as possible, it's in everyone's else a friend. This doesn't come on things. Like what?



high school student body. But as best interest to consider everyone its own. You have to do some

◆ get involved in extracurricular

activities or sports

◆ make an effort to talk to people – even if you're a little shy

◆ discourage cliques – these can (no, make that they *do*) hurt the sense of community and just make people feel bad

◆ participate in school – don't just attend. Get enthusiastic about classes *and* the upcoming powder puff football game.

You'll be glad when you expanded your circle of friends...especially if things start changing with your old ones. Sad to say it, but that is probably going to happen. More on that later.

Dating You'll see more and more of this in high school. May even experience it yourself.

You meet. You like each other.

It often starts as simply as that. But keeping a relationship going – and HEALTHY – can be something of a challenge. It takes :

Respect

This means valuing each other as people and showing it in the way you treat each other.

Trust

This means believing in the person – knowing he or she wouldn't *intentionally* hurt you.

Common interests and values

This doesn't mean you have to share the other person's passion for a sports team or a music group or a style of dress. It's more about what's generally important to you in life.



DANGER SIGNS

Sometimes relationships start unhealthy relationship, one or both

○ not support the other person's

* become jealous or possessive, such as talking to other girls/guys

* making the other person feel bad using insults or ridicule

* gets angry a lot

* abuses the other person – physically, emotionally, or sexually



heading down the wrong path. In an unhealthy relationship, one or both people may:

○ not support the other person's

* become jealous or possessive, such as keeping the other person from

If you suspect a behavior is abuse, it **PROBABLY IS** – get help right away. Talk to an adult you trust. **Abuse is never the victim's fault.**

Everybody's changing

As you enter high school, this might be what you're thinking about the people you are close to. But guess what? They're probably thinking the same way about you. Fact is, people and relationships *do* change. This is natural albeit sometimes painful.

PARENTS under THEIR roof

At this point, you're probably living with your parents. You may be perfectly cool with this – well...most of the time, anyway.

Got issues? Any of this started happening at home?

- They make me come home too early
- They don't give me enough privacy
- They won't let me do what my friends are doing
- They want me to spend more time with them
- Anything else?



Maybe none of this applies to you, which is great. But if you're like many people your age who think their parents are becoming a bother, remember: **It's more likely you, not them, who's changing.** And they're doing their best to keep up!

So try and cut your parents some slack. But if something's really bothering you, you need to talk it out.

FRIENDS “We used to be like THIS.”

Friendships can have a way of changing. You may wake up one day and realize, *Wow, we've really grown apart.* Here are some of the common friendship rattlers:



- ◆ One of you is more interested in popularity than true friendship. For example, one of you starts partying, etc. to fit in and the other isn't interested.
- ◆ One of you starts dating someone and the dating relationship becomes the most important thing. (NOTE: If you start dating someone, don't forget about your friends!! PLEASE!!)
- ◆ Things just change naturally. One or both of you get busy with a sport, or a job, new people, etc.

IT CAN FEEL SAD. But keep in mind that it's not a tragedy. Changing relationships are a part of life – and you can actually grow from the experience. Try focusing on new relationships. This is what high school and life are all about.

Communication is the key!!

Every relationship you have is dependent upon good communication. You need it when talking to your teacher, reasoning with your best friend, or disagreeing with your parents. So take in these tips – and use them.

Know the three ways you can go.

There are basically three ways to communicate. To demonstrate this, let's say you want to tell your boy- or girlfriend that you feel you've been feeling ignored. You could say:

1. “You're totally blowing me off lately. You're obviously seeing someone else”

Whoa, hold on there, OK – this would be the **aggressive** approach. Being aggressive means being demanding and accusing, even nasty. Safe to say that if this conversation continued, it would probably involve a lot of yelling, interruption, and little communicating.

2. “I'm feeling sort of left out of your life lately. I'd like to talk about what's going on.”

Sounds reasonable, right? That's because this is the **assertive** approach. When you're assertive, you make your feelings known without attacking the other person. You exercise your right to be heard without trampling on the other person's.

3. “.....”

Now how are you going to get anywhere if you say nothing? Sure, you may *think* you're avoiding getting hurt yourself, or you may *think* you are avoiding making your boy- or girlfriend mad, but are you really feeling any better? Saying nothing – or keeping your true opinions and thoughts hidden – is being **passive**.

This is a no-brainer: ASSERTIVE is the way to be.

And look at the pronouns. In example #2, the “I” messages mean you are focusing on your own thoughts and feelings, not the other person. Think back about a conversation that didn't go the way you wanted – it could have been about school, home related, or it could have been personal. Do you think the downfall had anything to do with communication styles? In other words,

- A. I think one or both of us were being aggressive OR
- B. I think one or both of us were being passive.



People Trouble: bullying and other harassments

Some people just don't want to cooperate. Instead of helping create a respectful school environment, they help poison it. They are the cancer of a school.

The MYTH of the bully

Some people might think of bullies as a normal part of school, like fire drills and bad meatloaf. But there's nothing normal – or OK – about bullying. Bullying is a type of harassment, and that my new friends, is always serious.

Look over these acts and see which ones could be considered bullying or harassment.

- making fun of someone's ethnic background, disability, or other "difference"
- teasing someone about his or her looks
- starting a rumor about someone
- passing on a rumor about someone after hearing it
- forcing someone to do something
- making someone feel excluded
- hitting or shoving someone
- writing something about a classmate in public view.



I hope you picked them all. Any of these could be considered bullying or harassing.

When it's SEXUAL

Sexual harassment is a specific, very serious type of harassment. It includes any act of a sexual nature that makes a person feel like they are pressured to do something they do not wish to do. And while it is usually more than just making you feel uncomfortable, that's what it starts with. It might be a comment, a joke, a rumor, a touch – anything.

We have a strict policy against sexual harassment. Report any incidents to teachers or staff.

PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure can lead you to do things you know are wrong, or at least not right for you right now. Besides sex, alcohol, or other drugs, maybe someone is trying to get you to skip class...or stay out all night...or join in harassing someone. You're closer to young men and women than you are little boys and girls. **Stand your ground!!**

ONE LAST PIECE OF ADVICE

After working with incoming 8th graders, or adolescents in general, I have noticed that sometimes the mouth will get the rest of the person in trouble. Use your eyes and ears before spouting off. In simpler terms, look and listen.

So hang onto this piece of wisdom because it will never allow you to get into trouble:

If you are not willing to write it down and sign your name to it for the world to see,

Then don't say it!!!!!!!