

# Daughter with few friends needs more activities

Dear Yvette,

What do I say to my 9-year-old daughter who doesn't have many friends and really wants more?

Vicki

Dear Vicki,

Start the conversation by finding out why your daughter thinks she doesn't have many friends. Is she feeling like other kids don't like her or that perhaps she doesn't have the same interests as other kids and she feels like an outcast? Is she an introvert; a loner?

It's important to make her feel good about herself and to watch for any indication that this is impacting her self-esteem. She needs to know that the number of friends a person has doesn't matter as long as she feels good about herself and knows that she is loved and valued.

Next, try engaging her in activities where she can meet a broader group of girls. Pre-adolescent girls can be tough sometimes. It helps to involve your daughter in activities that she enjoys in venues where she will meet like-minded girls. The Girl Scouts is a great group for girls, particularly if she is shy and doesn't make friends easily. The atmosphere is comfortable and the activities allow for skill development and bonding.

Other activities you can try are sports, dancing, swimming, book clubs, tae Kwondo, scrapbooking, etc. Give your daughter the opportunity to explore her interests and to be open to stretching herself by trying new things. As she grows in her own self-confidence she will be more outgoing and meet new friends.

This is a critical time for girls. It's important to help her develop her entire self-character, intellect, empathy, and her physical and emotional self. Validate that she is a wonderful person and help her develop her individual talents so she can be comfortable in her own skin.

Yvette

Dear Yvette,

I am seriously concerned for my "niece." She is living with a "functioning alcoholic" parent who, until recently, wasn't violent. Her other parent doesn't have a very stable household either. I would love to take her in and even adopt her but I'm not yet in a position to do it (recent grad, temporarily staying with family, etc.). At least that's what I'm concerned the authorities may say. I am afraid she'd get lost in foster care, but I'm also concerned for her at home. She has missed so much school. I am only a weekend away from calling the police. I just want to do the best possible thing for her and her parent because it isn't always this bad. I just don't know; what should I do?

Sincerely Concerned

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Log onto ColumbusParent.com for solutions to teen lying and learn how to soften the blow when your child's friend moves away.

Dear Concerned,

I appreciate how difficult this situation is for you. However, your first priority has to be protecting your niece. She will not get lost in the foster care system because she has you to be there for her. Even if you can't care for her, it doesn't mean you can't be present in her life. And, for the few horror stories you have heard about foster care, the vast majority of foster parents are wonderful, caring people who open not only their homes, but their hearts to the children they care for. Please make the call to Children Services today!

If there are other family members, you should enlist them in an intervention with your niece's mom. The potential loss of her child may be the jump start she needs to start addressing her addiction. She will also need a support system that holds her accountable and does not enable or excuse her behavior. However, regardless of the mom's choices, this has to be about this little girl and her right to be cared for and protected. If mom is an alcoholic, she could be exposing this child to dangerous people who will harm her. One of the most difficult things for a child is to know that family members are aware of her situation and no one is doing anything to protect her. Beyond the pain of any physical abuse, this scar will stay with her forever and impact who she is.

Make the call. Stay connected to the child and offer to be a resource for her. See if there is a family member or friend who is willing to care for your niece. Child Welfare authorities prefer to place children with relatives. This little girl is counting on you to act. MAKE THE CALL!

Yvette

*Families are encouraged to send their parenting questions concerning their children's challenging or difficult behavioral issues to Brown at columbusparent@thisweeknews.com or Columbus Parent Magazine, 7801 N. Central Dr., Lewis Center, OH 43035.*



**Yvette McGee Brown** is a former domestic relations/juvenile court judge. She is currently the president of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Nationwide Children's Hospital.