

Tips for Girls from PARENT Speaker Series presenter Rachel Simmons

1. The Myth of the BFF

What if we could accept that no one friend can be everything to us? The myth of the BFF, and the hope that she's out there, somewhere, runs deep inside many of us. But some friends are better talkers than listeners; others are crisis managers you seek out in a jam who are unreliable day-to-day. As hard as it is, having close friends who disappoint us may be for the best. It opens the door to more friends to love, develops our resilience and self-reliance, and often makes us more flexible and forgiving ourselves.

2. Speaking Up is a Victory, No Matter the Outcome

Deciding whether to speak up when we're hurt or angry isn't easy. Try not to let your anxiety about the outcome own your choice. Sometimes we have to speak just to be heard, just to exercise the muscle of using our voice and to celebrate its value, even if the result isn't what we wanted. Remember: your voice is worth as much as the relationship you want to heal.

3. What's Your Gossip Ratio?

How much time do you spend talking about other people with your friends? If it's more than half, you may be building an unhealthy relationship. Friendships are like homes: they need sturdy foundations. Too much venting, gossip and judging are like termites. What kind of bricks are you building your house with?

4. Don't Use Silence As A Weapon

When a friend disappoints you, silence can feel easiest. Maybe I won't return that call and avoid a bigger flare-up. But silence is a weapon, too, even more powerful because of its ability to make the other person obsess over it. It's easy to assume she doesn't notice your silence, or care, but that's almost never the case. Remember the power of your silence. An empty space can be the most painful.

5. Loyalty Doesn't Mean Hating Who Your Friends Hate

Do you expect friends to get angry at people you're fighting with? That kind of loyalty isn't part of a healthy friendship. Conflict is scary and lonely, but it's yours, not your friends'. Get sympathy, not support. Asking friends to have your back increases the drama and puts them in an unfair position. Stay classy and keep it one-on-one.

6. Broken Hearts Are Wise Hearts

Heartbreak teaches us things that nothing else can. Think about the people who have hurt you. What did they teach you about your strength, values and standards? Pain in a relationship is unavoidable, but we get to walk away with hard-earned wisdom that will stay with us forever.

7. Don't Overthink It During A Conflict

When we face an unresolved conflict, perseverating can make us feel more in control. But too much thinking pulls us further away from our rational, best selves, and usually makes us more anxious and depressed in the process. Try to stay in the now. Focus on how you & the other person might feel. Stick with the events that inspired the problem, and consider practical next steps. Until we have all the information, we gain little from thinking about what the conflict says about who we are — or who they are.

8. Friend Divorce is Inevitable

Have you had a friend divorce? No matter how much the other person may have wronged you, it's hard not to blame yourself when a friendship ends. In a culture where girls are under pressure to be friends with everyone, losing a friend feels like a failure. But it's so unrealistic. Few friendships last forever. How much angst would we spare ourselves if we just accepted friend breakups as part of life?

9. Do You Like The Person, Or Just Want To Be Liked?

Good Girls are taught to value ourselves by how well-liked we are. When we meet a new person, many of us automatically kick into charm mode, trying to be liked — before we've even decided what WE think of the new person. Next time you meet someone, watch yourself to see if you do this. Pause to decide what you think first.

10. Love Yourself: Ask for Help

Refusing the help of others isn't always a sign of generosity or independence. Accepting help sends the message that you believe you're worthy of being supported. Next time, try letting someone else lighten the load. Do it as an act of self-love, and to set an example for the ones you love, too.