

THE PARENTS' CHAT ROOM

By: Dr. Maulik Trivedi



Q: *Dear Dr. Trivedi, I am 16 years old and I have a twin sister. We have always got along well except for the usual sisterly tiffs but things changed after our sweet sixteen birthday party four months ago. Even though we look alike, she seems to have become prettier and I hate sharing my clothes and my looks with her. I don't like the way I feel. It came out even more when at our party I had invited John, a boy I really like and my sister knows it. John was trying to hit on her all evening long. I love my sister dearly but I resent it that she looks better than I do and boys seem to like her more than they like me. We were going to go to the same university but now I want to go to a whole new country! This is mean and I am not a mean person. Please help me become what I was four months ago.*

A: It is not unusual for two people who have identified with each other so closely while growing up to start drifting away as they get older. In fact, it is absolutely normal and healthy to go through the transformation that you are undergoing. You and your sister, although twins, are your own unique individuals. Each of you as positive characteristics as well as your own challenges. What makes it difficult for you is that the individuality that you are developing is at the cost of losing the comfort of reliable old sameness between you and your twin sister. Here are some suggestions to ease the pain and allow you to have an even better relationship with your sister for the next 16 years...at least!

Instead of seeing your individual differences in taste, appearance and preferences as grounds for drifting apart, try to accept them as unique attributes of each of you that make you who you are. If someone likes your sister more, it does not mean that you are less likable; Although, it seems that you have felt less pretty in that situation. Be careful not to let one person's opinion of you or your sister change a lifetime of loving relationship. It is OK to feel hurt in the situation you describe. It is not OK to hold your sister responsible for the way things are turning out.

You can simply work on finding another relationship for yourself that is more suitable for you. You are guaranteed to feel more happy and confident. If you develop a relationship based on support and understanding while accepting your uniqueness, then you will have set strong foundation for your future rela-

tionship. Keep the conversation going with your sister and you'll both discover that you are very lucky to have each other.

Q: *Dear Dr. Trivedi, I am a 15 year old boy who has no friends. I try to make friends but nobody seems to care about me. How do people make friends and stay friends? I share everything I have but my friends don't want to hang out with me.*

A: Being 15 and not having people in your life whom you can identify as friends can be a very lonely feeling. I am delighted that you are seeking answers to your dilemma. Here are some suggestions that I have for you.

For beginners, you might take the focus away from recruiting friends and simply develop a comfort level with yourself. Do things by yourself that you enjoy. Spend time working on your hobbies and try to do new things that you enjoy doing. Being alone yet having fun is a sign of knowing your personal likes and dislikes. Furthermore, it is through having fun in this way that you will attract others to become your friends. When you enjoy life, you will walk about with positive energy which will attract others to you.

As for how to make friends, I recommend that once you have figured out what activities and hobbies interest you, you seek out others who share an interest in those same things. There are at least a handful of people right in your school who have similar interests as yours. Those people would make an excellent choice of friends for you. Don't be hesitant to try new things either. You can also pose the same question to your guidance counselor at school and/or your parents for their input. They are likely to share their own experiences that are similar to yours. This would help you see your situation as being a normal part of growing up.

Also, remember that sharing in friendship is a two way street. One can not keep giving without receiving. One can not share in hopes of earning (buying) a friendship. But is generally true and probably inevitable that sharing happens as a result of friendship.

Dr. Trivedi is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist. He treats children, adolescents and adults. Please visit www.MINDvantage.com for more information.

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