

A Circle of Friends...a Commentary on Columbine

Who is in your circle of friends? How did your circle of friends develop? How does your group of friends handle other kids who would like to join your group?

This is a difficult question to ask a young person but I'm going to ask. What drives your group? What does it take to become a part of your "circle of friends"? Is your circle based on common interests or hobbies? Is it based on skills? Is it based on shared goals? Or is it based on being and remaining "popular"?

If you find that it is necessary to wear the right clothes or have the right shoes or be in the right (acceptable) clubs or organizations, if you have to laugh at jokes that are not funny or laugh at specific people not in your group? Or if you have to follow leaders who are leading the group in the wrong direction, or if you are expected to do things that you know you shouldn't do, or if you have to become a party to putting other people and other groups down, or if you find that your association with the group is causing your relationship with your family to suffer.....then I would seriously consider finding a new group. How does being in a group like that make you a stronger and better person? How does being in a group like that make you a better adult as you grow up? Guess what! It doesn't.

This is the fifth anniversary of the tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado. The two young men involved in causing that tragedy were, from all accounts, outside the mainstream groups. In fact, according to the videos I have seen of these young men, they hated all the mainstream groups and the kids in them. I wonder why. The videos definitely showed their hatred. But the videos don't come close to telling us what caused the hatred.

We will never know all the details of that terrible day at Columbine High School. We will never know what caused that event that affected the lives of so many people across the nation. And although we can never condone the course of action they decided to take, we should try to understand what caused them to do what they did. We'll never know what drove those young men that culminated in that horrible day and we'll never know what part society played in it either.

People are trying to understand. They are trying to find some clue by watching the videos the boys left, reading their web site and their journals, all filled with anger and hatred. But are the clues there or should people have been looking much, much earlier?

I wish I could have seen how those young men were treated by other kids and other groups when they were little. Their suicides certainly seemed to indicate that they were more than willing to leave this life. What had life done to them to make them so angry?

So my question to you, scouts, is this. How do you treat others? The kids you like and the kids you don't. I know that I remember the kids I was mean to. And I remember the kids who were mean to me. You never forget that stuff. Ever.

A Scout is kind. Reach out to others. Reach down to those less fortunate. Reach up to those who have knowledge or skills that can make you a better person. Reach out to those who can use your help. Widen your circle. Don't limit yourself to one little group of people.

Remember that the interactions you have with others are like throwing pebbles in a lake. The ripples go

forever. The kind things you say to someone might show up years later in ways you can't imagine. I really believe that this is true. But if it is true, then the reverse is also true. The terrible things you say and do to people might show up years later in ways that you cannot imagine.

And above all, remember this. We've all heard about the Golden Rule. But I want to address what I call the "The Black Rules". Those rules are.....One of the best ways to make yourself feel better....is to make somebody else feel worse. One of the best ways to make yourself feel more important....is to make someone else feel less important. One of the best ways to make yourself feel strong....is to make someone else feel weak. One of the best ways to lift yourself up....is to force someone else down.

These are rules that a good Scout should never be a part of. A Scout who is kind will never treat another child with such disrespect. If your circle of friends practices the Black Rules.....do yourself a favor. Make new friends.

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