

Like Me

By Tara Spinelli for Jersey Moms Blog

Long after the average social-networking laggard joined Facebook, I finally jumped in. A dear pal of mine was leaving NJ, and I thought Facebook could help my family know what was happening with hers, if not a whole lot like when they lived down the street, at least in some shadow of a meaningful way.

I had been warned about the hours you could lose prowling and carousing, like a drunk on a bender, and knew I'd be powerless to resist another "information" addiction with its associated stream of make-me-look thoughts: "Let me just check to see if anyone commented on my post," I'd reason. "Huh. No comments. That's weird, because I thought it was funny and interesting. Not like those posts where someone's like, 'I just ate a hot dog,' then 14 people comment and Like it. Really? What's to Like? Better check my own clever post again. Someone must've commented by now. Huh. Nope. Weird."

Not only did thoughts like these make me look, but they showed I cared. I cared about social interactions on Facebook just like I care about social interactions in the real world. Once we had connected on Facebook, whether friends or "friends," what people said, how they responded to me, mattered.

So, yeah, in spite of my capacities for logic and reason, I cared when I realized I had been unfriended on Facebook for the first time. (How about a gentle, painless Hide instead? My posts, as clever as I think they may be, are out of your face but I'm none the wiser, so we both win! Now that's "friendship.") This Facebook friend (who friended me, by the way, not the other way around) was the very nice parent of one of my son's classmates who had moved away several months ago. When she and her family still lived here, our kids were friendly, if not buddies, and involved in some of the same activities. We sometimes talked on the blacktop or in the park, and when she was looking for volunteers for something she was organizing, I raised my hand. No, we were not friends exactly, but certainly friendly.

Rationally, I completely understand. She has moved away, is making new friends and acquaintances, needs to leave her old life behind and focus on her new one. Emotionally, I feel more like my 11-year-old daughter as she figures out how to be a friend, what friendship means, and what it doesn't. All my experience as a friend and a grown-up, fully aware of the logic of something like keeping your Facebook friends up-to-date and relevant, doesn't automatically take away that little sting from being excluded, and that nagging doubt, "Does she like me? Did she ever?"

Not exactly a newsflash for me, but this small Facebook event highlighted the fact that it matters more than it should whether or not someone likes me.

Resolving this for myself would be wise, but of even more immediate concern is making sure that this issue doesn't confound the messages I give my kids. I want them to understand the difference between feeling liked—how people react to you—and trying to be a good friend according to your own internal standards, which I think go something like this:

Take a good look at yourself, including from your friend's perspective, and see what your role might be in any given situation. Always give a friend the benefit of the doubt and assume the best intentions. Try to talk honestly and openly, and really listen. Understand that you can only change your own behavior. Accept what you can't change.

I think that's advice that I...er...they can use. In conclusion, I hope you liked this, and I hope you like me. (Do you?)