



Life Actually By Kari Kampakis

Is there hope for quiet kids?

Through my writing and my life as a mom, I often hear from mothers who share the struggles their kids face.

One concern I hear is for those children who are shy or quiet. “My child is so kind, loving and compassionate,” they’ll say, “but socially, she falls through the cracks. She rarely gets invited to parties, and she doesn’t have any good friends.”

These moms don’t care about their kids being popular or belonging to a particular circle. They don’t want to change their kids because they understand how important it is to be kind, loving, and compassionate.

But when they see their child sit home every weekend with nothing to do and notice how it impacts their self-esteem, it hurts them. All they want is for someone to notice what their child has to offer and for their child to take some initiative in making friends.

I have several thoughts on this because I was once a shy and quiet girl. (Case in point: At summer camp at age 10, I clung to the counselors all week instead of making

friends, and they loved me so much they created an award for me at the final ceremony: Quietest Camper. I was mortified, to say the least.)

While several things helped draw me out of my shell, one key factor was understanding that when it comes to friendship, quality matters more than quantity.

Because it’s better to have one true friend than 10 half-friends, right? It’s better to find one true friend who lets you be yourself than 10 half-friends who force you into a mold. Once you have a true friend, you’re likely to attract other friends who see you two having fun and want to join in. Over time, you can grow a small village this way.

I also believe it’s helpful for shy and quiet kids to use their God-given talents. When you’re introverted by nature, connecting with people can be hard. You may go unnoticed or get overshadowed by those extroverted personalities who fit into our extroverted world.

By pursuing those passions that bring you alive, however, you forget to be shy. You

draw people into your world by touching their heart, mind and soul and making connections that foster an automatic sense of belonging.

Just think about the shy boy who sits down at a piano and stuns the audience with an amazing performance. Or the poet who crafts the most beautiful prose that no one ever knew she had in her. Or the dancer who shines on stage, the artist who creates masterpieces and the scientist with a fierce determination to solve the latest mystery.

As shy and quiet kids reveal their talents, they get seen in a new light. They build relationships based on who they are inside and the strengths that grow more obvious with time.

So if you’re raising a shy or quiet child, my advice is to keep the faith. Love your child the way they are and encourage them to use their gifts to connect and build bridges with others.

It may take time and extra courage, but shy and quiet kids can live as bravely and boldly as extroverts. They can learn to strike

a healthy balance between recharging in their shell and putting themselves out there to take risks.

What an introvert needs most from their parents is unconditional love. By having confidence in them and never doubting how incredible they are, you slowly build them up. You instill a sense of security that may eventually help them step out of their comfort zone, take a chance, and start to show the world the beautiful gifts they have to offer.

Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis is a Mountain Brook mom of four girls, columnist and blogger for The Huffington Post. Her newest book, “Liked: Whose Approval Are You Living For?” will be released Nov. 15 and is available for pre-order on Amazon. Her first book, “10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know,” is available everywhere books are sold. Join Kari’s Facebook community at “Kari Kampakis, Writer,” visit her blog at karikampakis.com or contact her at kari@karikampakis.com.

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