

Must My Kids Play with Your Kids, Just Cause?

What do we teach our kids when we pressure the parents of others kids to pressure their kids to play with our kids?

I don't believe that the world owes me anything, or conversely, that I owe the world anything.

Sure, I've borrowed from people, and when I do, I've accrued a debt that I should pay back if I hope to easily borrow in the future.

I've also asked people for favors in the hope they'd do favors for me.

None of that has much to do with what I'm talking about. I'm talking about this idea that because our kids are related, or the same age, or coincidentally in the same house right now, that my kid must play with your kids, or that your kid must play with my kid.

When we pressure our kids to play with other kids or to relate with other people, anybody, what we teach them is that people should not associate freely on the basis of attraction, but rather, that the purpose of being is to please others.

And that's just stupid. It amounts to slavery. Doesn't it? That you exist to please me? That you owe me your time and attention, by virtue of my existence?

Come on now. I'm sure you see how crazy that is.

Rather, I want my kids to learn that if they want someone's time and attention, *they need to earn*. It's not owed to them.

Even as their parent I don't believe I owe them time and attention. I choose, happily, to give it. Most of the time. Some of the time they're super annoying and I walk away. When they get upset, I tell them openly and honestly how I'm feeling and why I'm leaving. I don't shame them. That's stupid, too. But I don't hide the fact that I'm feeling annoyed by their behavior, and if they want me to stay, they should take a breather and consider changing it.

Isn't that what adults do?

I love my children. Unconditionally. (I hope, they haven't murdered anyone yet, so we'll see.) And they need to know that if they want to relate to others and vice versa, they need to work for it. It's not and shouldn't be a given in life. And how much more rewarding will that relationship be if it's been freely chosen by both parties? Think about it.