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PARENTING / APRIL 1, 2015

Ask Ariel: I'm Not Ready for Play Dates



by Ariel Frager

My daughter is 8 and we are starting to have play dates now where the parents do not always attend. I'm very hesitant to allow her to visit someone else's home unless they are a relative or close family friends. Am I being overprotective? We are more than happy to have school friends to our home for an afternoon, but I'm not ready for her to enter the home of someone she goes to school with whose family I don't know. Is this helicopter parenting or keeping my child safe?

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Signed,
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Dear P or P,

The most important phrase of your question is, "I'm not ready." You're not ready for play dates. You're not ready for your daughter to begin the process of moving away from you. You're not ready for her to have a life that is independent from your family and close friends. It's okay, Mama, you don't have to be ready yet. Eight is still so young and there will be plenty of play dates and sleepovers in your daughter's future.

Here is the important part: Make sure when invoking the "I'm not ready" phrase that you are not holding your kid back from something important that she might need to do now, even before you are ready. You need to balance your feelings with her need to explore the world. Maybe those play dates at other houses are really important for your daughter to learn about how other families function. Maybe some of the play dates are with families that are different from your family ethnically, religiously or culturally. Learning through an invitation to the other child's home could bring with it a great experience for your daughter.

Parenting is one long process of letting go. With every phase, with every season, with every year, our children are finding their own way in the world. It is our job to teach them how to navigate many different situations, first while holding our hand and eventually without our guidance. I hope you are ready to begin this letting-go process when your daughter is ready to take some steps of her own, out into the world.

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SHARES

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Ariel Frager

Ariel Frager is a school counselor and has a private therapy practice that specializes in treating children, adolescents and



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