

Welcome Back, SSMS families! We are excited to begin another school year and are looking forward to working together to make it successful.

With a new school year, and, for some, a new school, adults and students often worry about social interaction. Remembering middle school, for many adults, brings back memories of teasing, ridicule, awkwardness, and losing and making friends. Even as adults we continue to experience middle school-esque situations; how we deal with these situations and how we teach our students to deal with these situations can be the key to a successful school year.

Perhaps the most important part of dealing with the harshness of middle school social interactions is keeping the lines of communication open. When a student tells a trusted adult he does not have friends, she is being picked on, or he does not feel like he fits in, listening with empathy and validating his or her feelings may keep communication going. Asking open ended questions, such as, “Why do you feel this way? What happened to make you think this?” may lead to surprisingly revealing information. Youth often feel adults do not understand them or can not relate to them and showing a desire to understand may validate the importance of their feelings and, therefore, the importance of their independence as a maturing individual. Understanding what the student feels may help the adult find the root of a problem, or the beginning of a problem. Validating a student’s feelings may also make him or her more likely to continue to share.

As previously stated, even adults continue to experience puzzling social interactions. We understand there may be a preconceived view the PTSA is a tight-knit group of women; however, this notion is not entirely true. South Seminole Middle’s PTSA includes incoming members from several elementary schools which ensures a variety of viewpoints, experiences, and needs. We hope to make the SSMS PTSA a diverse group of student advocates working collaboratively towards maintaining high academic and social standards. We, as PTSA, would like to extend an invitation to all parents, teachers, students, guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and everyone in between, to join us. We would like to meet you, form friendships, and share ideas to help each other navigate the oft-confusing middle school years. We want to communicate with *you*. There are many ways to communicate with us. You may like us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/South-Seminole-Middle-School-PTSA/470131360466>), follow us on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/SouthSeminoleMS>), and Instagram (<http://instagram.com/southseminolemspta>), email us (ssmspta@gmail.com) or view our website (<http://ssmspta.weebly.com/>). Membership applications may be printed from our website and, in the upcoming weeks, we will be sending application forms home with students. Completed applications may be returned to the front office; upon receipt, membership cards will be sent home with students.

We look forward to meeting you, exchanging ideas, helping each other, and making this a successful school year.