

# MAKING FRIENDS

Developing and maintaining friendships is a dynamic process

Most children experience some type of rejection from their peers throughout childhood. One study found that even popular children were rejected about one quarter of the time when they approached children in school.

Most research into children's friendships shows that those children who are able to form friendships when they start school are happier at school and also learn better.

More significantly, a positive beginning to friendships has long-term implications for social and, indirectly, academic success.

Most children experience social rejection and recover. They move on and form constructive, worthwhile relationships but some children need help.

The results of a number of studies indicate that children can be taught friendship skills. The strategies are simple and revolve around teaching children a range of friendly behaviours such as: talking with others while playing, showing an interest in others, smiling, offering help and encouragement when needed, a willingness to share and learning how to enter a game or social situation. It is also useful to teach some children alternatives to fighting and arguing when there is disagreement and conflict within groups.

Generally parents need to do little more than provide social situations for children to build and maintain friendships.

However some coaching on how to make and keep friends may be desirable when children really do have difficulty making and keeping friends.

## HELPING CHILDREN LEARN THE ART OF MAKING FRIENDS

### HERE ARE EIGHT IDEAS THAT MAYBE USEFUL TO HELP COACH YOUR CHILD IN THE ART OF MAKING FRIENDS:

- 1.** If possible, **establish a dialogue** with your child about friendships so that you offer support when there are difficulties and provide some ideas when needed.
- 2.** Identify and discuss any behaviour such as teasing, bullying or self-centredness that may **prevent your child from making friends**. Sometimes a child's remarks can irritate others to the extent that he or she is ostracised.
- 3. Teach some social skills** such as how to start up a conversation and how to hold the interest of others during a conversation.
- 4.** Provide opportunities for your child to **have friends at your place** after school or on weekends so that friendships can develop. An invitation to bring a friend along to family outings and holidays can provide opportunities to strengthen friendships.
- 5.** Encourage your child to **participate in out-of-school activities or groups** that may provide opportunities

to meet new people away from the peer groups at school. Friendships formed through shared interests are often very strong.

**6.** Encourage your child to **take up a challenging or interesting activity** so that he or she becomes a more interesting person for others to be around.

**7. Limit the time spent in solitary activities** if your child appears to have few friends. Be humane and kind but don't be afraid to insist children mix with others of their own age.

**8. Technology offers children opportunities** to make and maintain friendships that were not available to past generations. This can be a positive thing however if all your children's friends are cyber friends then it maybe time to put some parental limits on the technology to encourage them to have personal contact with others.



Parenting *ideas*  
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