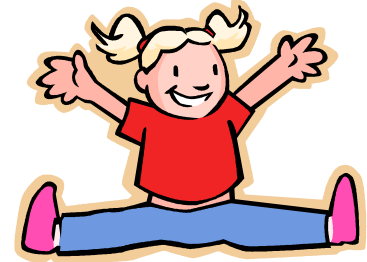


HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD MAKE AND KEEP FRIENDS

Friends and the ability to make friends is an important part of a child's development. Children need the acceptance and the support of their peers. Making and keeping friends is not as easy as one might think. There are some basic friendship skills that all children (and adults) can practice to help them make or keep friends.

How You Can Help



- ❖ **Respecting Others:** Encourage your child to respect differences in others (differences in how they may look and act) and to look for the good inside each person. Make a point to talk about the good in others especially those that are from another culture or who look or act different from you.
- ❖ **Talking to Others:** Practice with your child how to meet and talk with people. Emphasize the importance of good eye contact, head and shoulders up, and a pleasant look on their face. Make sure to compliment your child when they use their courage to begin conversations with others.
- ❖ **Listening to Others:** Good listening involves listening with your ears, body and brain. Allow time for your child to practice good listening. Review the following skills of good listening: sit still, face the speaker, good eye contact, make listening noises when appropriate such as, "yes", "um...", and "uh-huh". Next spend a few minutes talking to them - perhaps telling about your day so they can practice good listening. Then make a point to compliment them on their good listening skills. Catch them at odd times during the day using good listening skills and point this out.
- ❖ **Caring for Others:** Discuss how others may not always feel the same that we do about a situation and it is important to look and think about how someone else feels. By knowing how others feel we can best choose how to help and get along with them. You can reinforce this concept by complimenting your child when they seem to understand their friend's feelings and make good choices about what and how to play. For example: "You were very nice to play inside when you saw that your friend didn't want to play outside."

- ❖ **Complimenting Others:** It is important to have friendly thoughts, use friendly words, and do friendly things. We can show and share our friendliness in our words by complimenting others, letting them know you missed them, and speaking to them and saying hello. Discuss at home how it feels to get a compliment and how it feels to give one. Come up with some ideas of what type of compliments your child could give to friends in his/her class. For example: "You are a great reader. I like your drawing." Modeling compliments will also help your child learn how to give a compliment but also how to receive them.

- ❖ **Disagreeing with Others:** Friends do not always get along and that is okay. Children need to learn how to disagree respectfully. Practice at home using I messages, letting others know what you are feeling and what you need from the other person. For example: "I am feeling sad. You didn't share your new toy with me. I would like to see your toy." Working on this skill at home will allow your child to become comfortable sharing their feelings but also sharing what they think they need to help solve the problem or disagreement.

If you feel like your child needs more practice with friendship skills, please seek out your children's teacher and/or school counselor. Often there are friendship groups running throughout the school year for this exact purpose - to practice making and keeping friends.

Other Resources:

<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/conflict> This is a great resource for both parent and child to work on and discuss together.

How To Be a Friend by Laurie Krasney Brown

How to Lose All Your Friends by Nancy Carlson

The Best Friends Book by Todd Paar

Ruby the Copy Cat by Peggy Rathman

The Recess Queen by Alexis O'Neill