

PARENT TIP SHEET: HELPING YOUR CHILD MAKE FRIENDS

Introduction

Children's friendships contribute to their wellbeing and development in many ways. They enable children to have fun, provide a sense of belonging and support and create opportunities to practise important social skills. Experiencing quality friendships at school also helps children to prepare for later adult friendships, work-based relationships and romantic relationships.

This tip sheet complements the information Life Education shares with your children in their school program and offers simple ideas to help them learn how to make friends.



TEACH YOUR CHILD 'FRIENDSHIP VALUES'

Teach and model key 'friendship values'. These include:

- Being loyal to a friend
- Accepting differences in a friend
- Standing up for a friend
- Being kind and supportive to a friend
- Including a friend

HELP YOUR CHILD TO UNDERSTAND AND COPE WITH COMMON FRIENDSHIP CONCERNS

These include:

- Everyone feels lonely sometimes. Very few children have close friends all the time.
- Having an occasional disagreement with a friend is normal.
- The loss of a friendship is not a failure but a normal and predictable aspect of growing up.
- Most children's friendships are not 'forever'. It is normal to move in and out of many friendships as their lives change. Children may change or grow apart and new children may enter the social picture. Research suggests that over a school year, between 25% and 50 % of children's school-based friendships don't survive¹.

TEACH AND MODEL THE 'SOCIAL SKILLS'* THAT UNDERPIN SUCCESSFUL FRIENDSHIPS

Explain to your child that just as they can get better at swimming by practising, they can also get better at making and keeping friends by practising social skills such as:

- Smiling and greeting classmates
- Sharing
- Cooperating
- Negotiating
- Being positive
- Having an interesting conversation
- Playing games well (e.g. being a good winner & loser)

SHY CHILDREN

Most children occasionally feel shy and anxious in some social situations. For some children however shyness and social anxiety can be an ongoing temperamental trait. If your child is shy help them develop their social skills [*outlined beside] and provide positive feedback each time they take on a new social challenge or display more confident social behaviour. Encourage them to focus on what is happening and the other children around them rather than on their own discomfort.

Remember to:

- Model and teach the values and skills that underpin your own friendships
- Provide positive feedback when you observe your child using social skills or values that have the potential to contribute to the development of their friendships
- Encourage and support them to take on social challenges such as joining a group or team or inviting someone over to play who they don't know well.