

Making and Keeping Friends

One of the best things a parent can do is help to teach their child how to develop friendships.

We have all experienced the warmth of someone caring for us at some stage in our lives and these “secrets” of friendship are ones we can actively share with our kids. You can explain to your children that friends are people who:

- Show their care for us
- Respect our feelings
- Support us in difficult times
- Cooperate
- Act fairly
- Keep most secrets and promises (not the ones where people get hurt)
- Try to get along with us

To teach your child these skills, try the following:

1. Be a good role model

Children from families where friendship skills are valued and regularly demonstrated are much more likely to make friends easily.

2. Develop games skills

Everyday family games are a great way to develop skills like taking turns, being a good winner, cooperating and being fair. Card and board games are a pleasurable way for the family to spend time together.

3. Build communication skills

Kids often don't know what to do or say in different situations. This can be taught by demonstrating and playing pretend games.

4. Build emotional skills

Learning how to manage feelings is an essential skill for keeping friends. Children need to be rewarded and encouraged to be calm and to use a pleasant voice. Rewarding tantrums by giving in disadvantages your child.

5. Encourage thoughtfulness

Keep a calendar of birthdays and other special events to encourage thoughtfulness. Demonstrate thinking about others and encourage this in your child by praising their efforts.

6. Cultivate Friendships

Encourage your child to join groups that have common interests such as Nippers. Help friendships grow by inviting over their friends for play and other fun activities.

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