

Talking to Kids About Friendship

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Kids aren't born with the knowledge they need to negotiate friendships and frenemies. We have to give it to them. Yes, we can leave them to muddle through and figure it out themselves. After all, that's what most of us did. But it's not necessary. We don't want our kids to just survive, we want them to thrive.

Making and keeping friends is a complex set of skills and decision-making processes that can be really poorly managed. Role modelling and talking with kids is the best approach in ensuring they:

- Understand what friends are
- Know how to make friends
- Know how to deal with conflict

But where do you start?



Try some Agree/Disagree statements

Aim: Get the conversation started

Ask your child to agree or disagree with these statements and then ask them to explain why. Listen to understand. Too often we listen to fix things. Listen to really understand where your child is coming from and how they feel. It will give you a firm base moving forward.

- a. Making friends is easy
- b. Friends are the most important thing to me
- c. My friends are good people
- d. I like myself around my friends
- e. Sometimes my friends can be mean
- f. I know what to say and do when my friends are mean to me
- g. Sometimes I can be mean
- h. I would like more friends
- i. Friendship is different online



Create a ‘Friend Wanted’ poster

Aim: Provide an opportunity for your child to identify what makes a good friend

- a. Use poster paper to create a Friend Wanted poster
- b. Ask your child to write a list of characteristics they would like in a friend
- c. What interests should their friend have?
- d. Have them add how much time they would like to spend with their Friend Wanted friend
- e. What would they like to do with their friend?
- f. What do they not want in a friend?
- g. Are there physical characteristics their friend should have?

This will give you a clear idea of what your child values in their friendships. It will also provide you the opportunity to talk about what you think matters in a friendship.

Create a ‘Friend for Sale’ advertisement

Aims: To encourage your child to value themselves

To point out to your child that to have good friends, they need to be a good friend

Ask your child to write an advertisement selling him/herself as a friend.

- a. What characteristics do they have?
- b. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- c. What do they offer another person in friendship?

Discuss the challenges and benefits of being a good friend. Use your own experiences in your discussion. They should know everyone struggles and has to learn how to be a good friend.

Try this Boundaries activity

Aim: To help your child identify what they will and won't do in a friendship

Friendship: Where Are My Boundaries?

I AM <i>Eg. Kind</i>	I AM NOT <i>Eg. Rude</i>
I WILL <i>Eg. Be supportive</i>	I WILL NOT <i>Eg. Not support mean treatment of others</i>
I WANT <i>Eg. To be able to share my feelings</i>	I DO NOT WANT <i>Eg. To keep secrets that make me feel uncomfortable</i>

'Friendships Come and Go' discussion

Aims: To encourage your child to recognise that friendships change and often end and that's okay and normal

To encourage your child to be optimistic about future friendships.

Show your child a picture of him/herself in Grade 1.

Ask: "What were you like at that age?"

"What did you like doing?"

"Who were your friends?"

Ask them to list all the friends they've had since Grade 1.

Then talk to them about how they have changed. Change is inevitable and good. We are all growing and changing. So, our friendships are changing too. We have to keep on growing throughout life and new friends help us do that.



For more information and activities related to friends and frenemies, make sure you put your name down [here](#) to be notified when Linda's eBook *[Friends and Frenemies](#)* is released.

Keep an eye out for [Linda's newsletter](#) which will be delivered to your email inbox fortnightly-ish. It contains great information to help you guide your children through their school years.