

RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

Positive peers make a huge difference

There is little doubt that positive peer relations impact on a child's academic success, emotional well-being and state of mind. A big claim but the truth is that we tend to reflect the views and attitudes of our peer groups. It is hugely beneficial if a child's predominant peer group cares for him, has positive expectations about the future and places high value on helping others as well as personal improvement.

Children's peer groupings can be quite complex and dynamic. Most children will have a prime peer group consisting of between two and up to five others. These children are generally referred to as best friends, buddies or best mates. These social relationships are often formed early in children's lives and are strengthened by shared school experiences, extracurricular or informal activities.

Children also have one or two secondary peer groups, which can be larger and generally reflect shared interests or shared best friends. When these groups contain children from different grades and even different schools they have an insulating effect if adverse events happen and also offer exposure to wider peer groups.

Being a member of a positive peer group lessens the likelihood of a child being bullied or harassed. Children in positive peer groups look out for each other and don't engage in such behaviours, whether verbal or physical, themselves. Having friends who care also lessens the impact of bullying and helps

prevent it from impacting on other areas of a child's life.

Parents and teachers can encourage positive peer groups to form and emerge by providing opportunities for children to mix and share experiences, drawing children's attention to friendship behaviours and focusing on socialisation rather than achievement when they play sport or are involved in creative or group activities.

In this achievement-oriented society we need to value positive peer relationships and ensure that they are not ignored or undervalued in our efforts to provide the best possible start for our children.



WHAT ARE YOUR CHILD'S PEERS LIKE?

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE POSITIVE PEER GROUPS?

DOES HE:

1. Have a number of children in his social circle who care for and stick up for him? **Yes [2] No [0]**
2. Have a good friend who acts responsibly and who is reliable? **Yes [2] No [0]**
3. Feel safe and is rarely bullied, singled out or victimised by others? **Yes [2] No [0]**
4. Have friendship groups who stay out of trouble at school and have positive attitudes

towards themselves and learning?

Yes [2] No [0]

5. Feel under extreme pressure from his peers to behave poorly or be involved in dangerous risktaking behaviours? **Yes [0] No [2]**

SCORE:

- 10:** A member of socially-healthy peer groups.
6-8: Surrounded by influential peers but are they positive?
0-4: Needs to find more positive peer groups.



TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To help your child become a member of positive peer groups try the following four strategies:

1. **Discuss** with your child how a good friend behaves. Ask him to identify some good friends and talk about what makes them a 'good friend'.
2. Encourage him to **join** at least one outside school group and be a member of at least one school artistic, sporting or interest group.
3. **Limit** your child's time in passive, solitary activities such as television-viewing, computer activities and Internet chatrooms.
4. Make an effort to get to **know** some of your children's friends and their parents.

ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit www.parentingideas.com.au

QUOTE

'When the character of a person is not a clue to you, look to his friends.'

JAPANESE PROVERB