

# RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

## Developing friendship skills in children

*Research into children's friendships shows that those children who are able to form friendships at school are far happier and also learn better. More significantly, a positive beginning to friendships has longterm implications for social and academic success.*

Studies also indicate that children can be taught friendships skills. The strategies are simple and revolve around teaching children a range of friendly behaviours, such as:

- talking with others while playing,
- showing an interest in others,
- smiling,
- offering help and encouragement when needed,
- a willingness to share, and
- learning how to enter a game or social situation.

It is also useful to teach children alternatives to fighting and arguing when there is disagreement and conflict within groups.

Gender impacts on the ability to make friends. Recent research has found that girls are further advanced along the stages of friendship than boys.

Gifted children are further advanced along the continuum of friendship behaviours than their peers. They look for more intimate friendships at a far younger age than their peers. This challenges the perception that gifted children have poor social



skills. It seems that they have a different concept of friendships than those around them.

It is healthy for children to form friendships inside and outside of school and their regular day settings. It seems that having friends outside school can be quite an insulating factor to teasing and bullying that can occur within the school gate.

Parents often become concerned about an apparent lack of friends that a child has compared to a sibling or a friend. One research project indicated that children on average have only two significant friendships at any one time. Anecdotal evidence suggests that second born children frequently have more friends than first borns and only children prefer one-on-one friendships to group relationships.

Generally, parents need to do little more than teach children sociable behaviours, such as manners and sharing, and provide social situations for children to build and maintain friendships. However some coaching on how to make and keep friends may be useful when children have difficulty in this area.

## WHAT'S YOUR CHILD LIKE?

DOES YOUR CHILD BEHAVE LIKE A GOOD FRIEND?

### DOES HE

1. Usually hold confidences that others may give? **Yes [2] No [0]**
2. Move on easily if conflict occurs rather than sulk or hold grudges? **Yes [2] No [0]**
3. Usually have a positive outlook and show enthusiasm about most things? **Yes [2] No [0]**
4. Know how to share his time, space and possessions with others? **Yes [2] No [0]**

5. Give and receive compliments easily?

**Yes [2] No [0]**

### SCORE:

- 10:** A friendly child. Probably very popular with peers.
- 6-8:** Knows how good friends act but may need to work on skills or attitude.
- 0-4:** Maybe a little self-centred. May need more exposure to a variety of social situations and help with basic friendships skills.



## TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To promote friendship skills in children try the following four strategies:

1. **Help** them start up a conversation. Give them some good conversation starters. Make sure they don't talk about themselves but focus on what interests others.
2. **Play** games with children and make sure they learn to be gracious winners and good losers.
3. **Have** one friend at a time over to your home so that they can form friendships one at a time.
4. **Show** children how to resolve conflict with others by compromising rather than refusing to give some ground.

## ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit [www.parentingideas.com.au](http://www.parentingideas.com.au)

## QUOTE

"Do not protect yourself by a fence, but rather by your friends."

CZECH PROVERB