

Making Friends

Professor Matt Sanders

CHILDREN WHO HAVE GOOD SOCIAL SKILLS FIND IT EASIER TO MAKE AND KEEP FRIENDS. THEY ARE LIKED BY THEIR PEERS AND GENERALLY GET ON WELL WITH OTHERS. THEY ALSO TEND TO HAVE FEWER ARGUMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS.

Having good friends has a major impact on children's self-esteem. Friends are important, but children do not always know how to look after them. Talk to your child about being a good friend and encourage your child to practice skills such as:

- Looking at and listening when someone is speaking to them, such as when a friend is telling them a story.
- Taking turns in games and activities,
- Asking what others might like to do rather than assuming that other children will always want to follow.

- Thinking about others people's feelings. "I wonder how Damien is feeling now. How do you think you would feel if that happened to you?"
- Helping others.
- Being friendly and welcoming to a new child in class.

You can also encourage your child to be considerate to others by modelling this behaviour yourself.

To help your child make friends you may like to invite another child to your home for a play. Be prepared to contact the parents to organise this if your child is too shy to ask.

Expect appropriate behaviour from your child when they have a friend over and discuss some rules first. Talk about what will happen if your child follows or breaks the rules. Ask your child to state the rules as a reminder: "So what do you have to remember today when Heather comes over to play?"

You also should expect appropriate behaviour from other children when they are a guest in your home. So, if a visitor is rude or demanding and you expect good manners from your own child, be prepared to remind the visitor of your house rules. Ask them to try again using a pleasant voice.

If there is a problem during the play time or if your child does something that deliberately hurts someone, describe what they have done wrong and get them to apologize or make amends. For ample, "Tanya, I want to talk to you about what happened then. When you told Abby to go away, she looked very upset. I want you to say sorry and let her join the game." If the problem occurs again on the same day, back up with either a logical consequence (eg remove the game), quiet time or time-out.

Find more parenting tips at: manitoba.ca/triplep or call 945-4777 in Winnipeg or toll-free 1-877-945-4777.

Professor Matt Sanders is founder of the Triple P - Positive Parenting Program.

