

How Parents Can Help Their Kids Make Friends

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As an Elementary School Counselor, I am often asked by parents for ways that they can help their child make friends. Here are some simple steps that you as a parent can take to help make friendship easier for your child.

Talk about it

The first step is to talk to your child and find out more about what is happening in their interactions with their peers. Kids may have difficulty making friends for different reasons – inexperience playing with other kids, bossiness, competitiveness, unwillingness to share, low self-confidence, or lack of hobbies. If parents can identify the cause of their child's difficulty making friends, they can better help resolve the problem.

Get to know the Other Parents

Other parents are your best resource. A friendly parent can help pave the way for your own child, introducing him to other kids, inviting her for play dates. Also, other parents may not be comfortable extending or accepting invitations to/from your child when they don't know you. You can meet other parents waiting to pick up kids after school, at school activities, or volunteering at the school.

Join Groups

Find a group that your child can be a part of, whether it's scouts, drama, an art/dance class, or a sports team. This new setting will enable your child to gain experience playing with other children and will allow her special skills to shine in a way they don't in the classroom. It's also a new opportunity for you to meet other parents.

Work on Social Skills

Observe how your child is acting with other children. Public places are not ideal for discussing the problems you see, but when you get home, talk to your child about ways he could be a better friend. Teach your child to share by reading stories about sharing and by practicing sharing at home during meals, watching TV, or playing with toys.

Invite Someone Over

For more reserved parents, the idea of a child's play-date can be a bit daunting. But, it is an important step because it helps move the friendship outside of the realm of just "school friends." Also, your child may feel more comfortable in his own home. Discuss in advance what activities your child might enjoy doing with a friend.

Talk to the School

Talk to your child's teacher about your concerns. Many teachers will pair and group children to help them socialize and work with others. The school counselor may have small group LunchBunches to assist children with making and keeping friends.

“The only way to have a friend is to be one.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Adapted from Making Friends-How Parents Can Help Their Kids With Friendship by Patricia Robinson, MA, MFT