

# ***CHILDREN'S FRIENDSHIPS: HOW PARENTS CAN HELP***

*I. How Do Children's Friendships Change During Childhood?*

*II. Why Do Some Children Have Friends While Others Don't?*

*III. What Can We Do to Help Children Get Along Better With Peers?*

1. Create Social Opportunities for Children

2. Teach Social Skills to Children. Use a Technique Called Coaching:

- Define and Demonstrate Social Skills
- Provide Opportunity for Practice
- Give Constructive Feedback

3. Help Children Rehearse Social Situations Through Books

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### ***I. PARENTS CAN EXPAND THEIR CHILD'S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS:***

1. Invite a new child to your house to play.
2. Help each other's children: include a child who is feeling left out.
3. Ask other parents for help: trade visits.
4. Moms need to go along sometimes. Work toward solo visits.
5. Ask teachers for help in directing your child to other playmates.
6. Schedule "Wednesday Afternoon in the Park" open to anyone in the class.

### ***II. PARENTS CAN HELP PLAY DATES GO MORE SMOOTHLY:***

1. Keep initial visits short.
2. If your child is bossy or has difficulty sharing, meet in a neutral place such as a park.
3. If there are certain toys your child will not share, put those toys away before the other child arrives. Agree on toys to share.
4. If your child is shy, arrange play dates with slightly younger children to give your child a chance to be a leader.
5. Keep a few activities or projects available for use when children are having difficulty agreeing on what to do next. A package of clay, some markers and stickers or wood scraps and glue can be brought out as a "Surprise" activity for both children to enjoy.

### ***III. PARENTS CAN HELP AT SCHOOL AND AT THE PARK:***

1. Encourage children to include others in their play: "What job can she have?" or "Here is another passenger for the train."
2. Gather a few children and start a new activity.
3. Respond to and don't ignore exclusion. Point out how sad the excluded child feels and help children think of ways to include the child in their play.
4. Teach assertiveness. Encourage children to let others know that they want to play, or that their feelings are hurt, or that they don't like it when another child pushes them.

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### ***How would you handle these situations?***

1. *You Can't Play*

Two children are playing on the top of the play structure. Two other children come over and ask to join in. The new children are rudely told, "Go away, you can't play here." You are the helping parent. What do you do or say?

2. *Joining In*

Two children are working on a large puzzle on the rug. When you walk by, you see a third child standing and watching the others. You sense that he wants to join in. What do you do or say?

3. *Aggression*

It's outside time and children are running to the sheds to get the bicycles. Two children claim the same bike at the same time. One of the children pushes the other child down, gets on the bicycle and races away. The other child is left sitting on the ground, crying. What do you do or say?

4. *Destruction*

Four children are building an elaborate structure out of blocks. They have been working on it for some time and they are very proud of it. Another child, who seems to be having a bad day, comes over and kicks the structure and destroys most of it. What do you do or say?

5. *Meltdown*

You invite a child to your house to play. The children are playing happily and all of a sudden they begin to argue. You didn't hear what happened but your child runs to her room crying and slams the door. What do you do or say?

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## **ADDITIONAL READING FOR PARENTS**

Borba, M. (2001). *Building Moral Intelligence*. California: Jossey-Bass.

Borba, M. (2005). *Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me*. California: Jossey-Bass.

Frankel, F. (1996). *Good Friends Are Hard to Find*. California: Perspective Publishing.

Gianetti, C. & Sagarese, M. (2001). *Cliques: 8 Steps to Help Your Child Survive the Social Jungle*. NV: Broadway Books.

Kaufman, G., Raphael, L. & Espeland, P. (1999). *Stick Up for Yourself! Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem*. New York: Free Spirit Publishing.

Klass, P. & Costello, E. (2003). *Quirky Kids: Understanding and Helping Your Child Who Doesn't Fit In – When to Worry and When Not to Worry*. NY: Ballantine Books.

McCoy, Elin. (1997). *What to Do When Kids Are Mean to Your Child*. Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association.

Thompson, M., Cohen, L. J. & Grace, C. O. (2001). *Mom, They're Teasing Me: Helping Children Solve Social Problems*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Thompson, M., Grace, C. O. & Cohen, L. J. (2002). *Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Understanding the Social Lives of Children*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Zimbardo, P.G. & Radl, S. L. (1999). *The Shy Child*. Cambridge, MA: Malor Books.

## **SUGGESTED CHILDREN'S BOOKS ON FRIENDSHIP**

Berenstain, S. & J. (1993). *The Berenstain Bears and the Bully*. New York: Random House.

Berenstain, S. & J. (1986). *The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble With Friends*. New York: Random House.

Bunnett, R. (1992). *Friends in the Park*. New York: Checkerboard Press, Inc.

Cole, Joanna. (1990). *Don't Call Me Names*. New York: Random House.

Crary, Elizabeth. (1982). *I Want It.; I Want to Play.; My Name Is Not Dummy*. Washington: Parenting Press.

Gainer, C. (1998). *I'm Like You, You're Like Me*. Minnesota: Free Spirit Publishing.

Petty, K. & Firmin, C. (1991). *Being Bullied.; Feeling Left Out.; Making Friends*. New York: Barron's.

Thomas, P. (2000). *Stop Picking On Me*. NY: Barron's.