



A Child's Social Life: Helping children navigate friendships and social situations

Learning about Learning ~ February 15, 2019 ~ Dr. Katherine Koonce

What makes a good friend? Parent free write.

Friendships across the developmental milestones:

Preschool Friendships

- 3-6 Years Old "Momentary Playmates"
- All about the fun - all about the moment
- Limited ability to see others' perspectives
- I want it my way
- "You're not my friend today"

Early Elementary Friendships

- 5 - 9 Years Old "One Way Assistance"
- Friendship goes beyond the moment
- You're my friend if you are nice to me
- Not considering their own contribution to the friendship
- Care a lot about friendships - will settle for a not-so-nice friend just to have a friend
- Might use friendship as a bargaining chip ("I'll be your friend if")

Upper Elementary Friendships

- 7 - 12 Years: Two-way, Fair Weather Friends
- "The Rules" and fairness is very important
- Children able to consider another's perspective
- Can't really take an observer's perspective
- They expect reciprocity
- Can be judgmental of themselves and others
- Jealousy and "secret clubs"

Adolescent Friendships

- Ages 12 - 18: Strong, mutually shared relationship
- Friends help each other solve problems and share confidences
- Young adolescents can be "joined at the hip"
- Accept and appreciate differences in their friends
- Value trust and support over time

~ Preparing your child to BE a friend ~

#1 Foster empathy

Model empathy
Teach point of view
Listen actively

Name and normalize emotions

#2 Help them practice social skills

Conversational skills
Interpersonal skills
Emotional self-control

These are skills that develop ONLY with practice.

#3 Talk to them about how important relationships are to God

Colossians 3:14

John 15:12

1 John 4:7

Proverbs 27:9

Helping Children Navigate “Tricky” Social Situations

- Don't get over-invested in your child's social life - don't immediately assume you need to get involved.
- Don't interview for pain.
- Help your child learn how to speak directly.
- Realize that your goals for your child may not be his/her goals.
- Talk about friendship in an open way.
- Help her solve the problem independently.

What To Do With Hurt Feelings

- Teach your child how to forgive.
- Teach your child how to ask for forgiveness.
- Model for your child how to let it go.

When Making Friends is a Struggle

- Avoid competitive games and other situations that can provoke conflict or discourage cooperation
- Help kids “read” facial expressions and other non-verbal cues.
- Be explicit - talk through scenarios
- Help them distinguish between “mean” and “bullying”

Use Children's Literature to Talk about Friendships

Prayers for Our Children's Friendships

⇒ Prayer for Our Children to be Filled With Compassion

⇒ Prayer for Our Children to Be Loving Friends

⇒ Prayer for Wise Friendships

⇒ Prayer for True Friendship

⇒ Prayer for the Ability to Accept Correction