

KINDERGARTENERS NEED FRIENDS



Parents play a crucial role in teaching their children how to develop and maintain healthy friendships. Often this happens unconsciously, but it helps if mom and dad can find ways to be intentional about it.

The first step is to guide and direct your child in the development of strong positive virtues. In other words, you have to begin by helping him or her become the kind of person who can be a good friend. By modeling and discussing these virtues, you can protect your child from many of the heartaches that result from unwise associations. Here are some of the most important qualities you can build into his or her character:

- **Honesty.** A truthful child is more likely to develop friendships with others who don't lie.
- **Loyalty.** A faithful child is less likely to be a fair-weather friend. Loyalty inspires us to support our friends in times of trouble.
- **Respect.** If you teach your child that everyone has been created in God's image and is worthy of dignity and respect, he or she will be more likely to show consideration and thoughtfulness to others.
- **Compassion.** Children who have a capacity to appreciate and understand the hearts of others are able to show sensitivity to those who are hurting or needy.
- **Acceptance.** By modeling openness and inclusiveness and teaching your child to reach out to those who are different, you will enable him or her to build friendships with those whom others reject.

The second step is to build your child's confidence. This is a key factor in helping him or her learn how to establish meaningful friendships early in life. What's more, a healthy self-esteem increases the likelihood that he or she will make wise choices about the associations and connections he or she forms with others. You can build your child's confidence by affirming his or her strengths and congratulating him or her when he or she does something well. Spending time with him or her on an individual basis—for example: going out for ice cream, taking a walk, or playing a game together—communicates the message that you value him or her as a person and enjoy his or her company. You can also facilitate the process of meeting new people by involving your child in socially interactive activities, such as sports or music. And you can encourage friendships by throwing parties and inviting his or her friends over for dinner. Try inviting a different child over every other week.

KINDERGARTENERS NEED FRIENDS



Third, help your child develop an attitude of open-mindedness and acceptance toward others. Exclusivity is a vice that poisons the well of genuine relationship and friendship. It's also a direct violation of Jesus' Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Here are some ideas that may help your child avoid the pitfalls of a clique mentality:

- Have your child invite someone new to his or her birthday party each year.
- Discourage an attitude of superiority.
- Read books that present the message that everyone is unique and has something valuable to offer.
- Ask your child to reach out to a classmate who is playing alone at recess or eating by him- or herself at lunch.
- Help your child to become involved in activities that promote teamwork.
- Teach your child how to reach out to the needy. Take him or her to visit the elderly in a retirement complex or nursing home, or sponsor a child in an underdeveloped country.

Read the full article here: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/kids-and-healthy-friendships/>