

How Parents Can Help Children Develop Friendships

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Parents can try a variety of strategies to encourage relationships to develop.

1. Create an environment in your home that attracts kids; make it a fun place for them to get together. Have snacks available; make children feel welcome to visit or just drop by. Have activities going on that your child and peers enjoy, such as Nintendo, bike-riding, games, etc.
2. Play “detective.” Observe very carefully the places where other children in the neighbourhood hang out, noting the activities they enjoy, trends in clothing, music, hairstyles, etc.
3. Sign your child up for community groups and activities that involve other neighbourhood children of the same age. Consider scouts, swimming, summer day camps, after-school clubs, church organizations, craft classes, etc.
4. Help your child reach out to children they like. Make phone calls, invite kids over to watch a video, take several children along to the pool, the mall or on a family outing.
5. Be sure your child has a typical routine, school day and lifestyle to minimize differences.
6. Find and model ways for friends to help your child participate – even if the participation is only partial. Demonstrate ways to include your child in games and activities as well as techniques to make your child feel comfortable and safe in new situations. Then let the kids be together.
7. Minimize adult presence and intervention in day-to-day activities. Let your child be directly involved with other children without an adult always being right at the child’s side.
8. Find a role in which your child can succeed, using their interests and strengths in different settings.
9. To keep things moving, invite two friends at a time over to play with your child.
10. Speak up when you need assistance or ideas to help your child develop relationships. Ask people at school, family friends, brothers, sisters or neighbours for support.
11. Become involved and visible with your child in neighbourhood and community activities.