



Comfortable Cafeteria

Week #2 Lesson Plan: Friendship Promotion!

Theme: Friendship! How to be a good friend, make new friends, and include others.

Lunch is an opportunity-rich time to make new friends. Close friendships contribute to happiness and feelings of mental well-being. Friends are people we can share our successes and joys with. Support from friends can also act as important buffers during everyday challenges or more significant crises in life. Children/youth are less likely to become a victim of bullying if they have at least one friend.

Lunch can also be a difficult time for some children who struggle to socialize and make friends. Who’s at-risk of not enjoying lunch and being with friends? Introverts might find it difficult to join a group. Students with disabilities, such as autism may have limited communication skills or have difficulty regulating emotions. Those with ADHD might find it difficult to sit for 20 minutes or may be distracted during conversations. It’s important for cafeteria supervisors to tune-into students who might struggle socially and encourage other students to actively include them. All students need to be taught to respect differences in other students – differences based on function, appearance, ethnicity, race, and skill level.



Goals:

1. Students learn qualities of a good friend and how to make and be a friend.
2. Supervisors learn about friendship, how to foster friendships and mealtime conversation starters and tips. Supervisors also learn how to tune-into to students who might struggle socially and tactfully encourage inclusion and friendships.

Handouts for Supervisors & Teachers:

- [Friendship Development for Supervisors/Teachers](#)
- [Fostering Friendships – Strategies for supervisors & teachers](#)
- [Peer Mediated Strategies for fostering inclusion of students with disabilities](#)

Handout for Students:

- [Making Friends handout for students to read](#)

Materials for brainstorming qualities of a good friend:

- Poster board or newsprint to be hung on cafeteria wall
- Tape
- Markers



Action steps for program facilitators (occupational therapist (OT) or other staff) leading the program.

➔ What to do BEFORE Week #2's session:

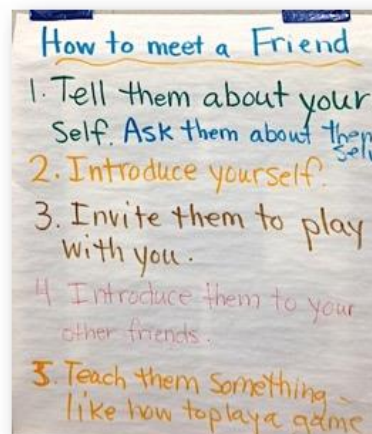
PROGRAM FACILITATORS: Read supporting materials related to fostering friendships.

- a. All of the handouts for supervisors/teachers and students (listed above) are located in the Week #2 section
- b. Read information on Tony Attwood's website about [Understanding and Teaching Friendship Skills](#)

CAFETERIA SUPERVISORS (and teachers): Give them the *Friendship Development* and *Fostering Friendships* handouts to read before the cafeteria session.

➔ DURING Week #2's Cafeteria Session – The OT or other program facilitator is present during lunch and facilitates a short discussion about friendships. Make a short presentation to all of the students in the cafeteria once they're seated (or, give a mini-presentation in the classroom before transition to lunch. Use the post-it paper and markers to write responses.

1. Ask students, "What do you remember about last week's Session #1?" (i.e., "We talked about what makes the cafeteria a 'Comfortable Place' to eat lunch and talk with friends; "We learned about the rules/code of conduct of the Comfortable Cafeteria".)
2. Explain that one way to enjoy the 'Comfortable Cafeteria' is by talking with existing friends and making new friends. None of us are born with friends. We have to make them throughout our lives and in different places like school, our neighborhood, church, camp, etc.
3. Ask "What are some qualities of a good friend?". **Write responses on poster paper** as students share. i.e., "caring, sharing, kind, listens, takes turns, trustworthy, interested in you, interesting, there through thick and thin, apologizes and forgives" etc.)
4. Ask "How do you meet someone new?" (Record answers on poster paper as students share: smile, say 'Hello', introduce yourself, ask them a question about themselves, show an interest in their life, or give a compliment)
5. Based on time availability and the age of the students, the discussion can also include Keeping Friends and /or Friends in Tough Times (see below)
 - Write questions on another poster: Ways to Make Friends; How to Keep a Friend; What to do when your friend is struggling or sad



Another option is to post these papers with questions on a wall where students are waiting in line to get their lunch. Have them talk about the topic and write their responses while they are waiting. Make sure an adult is circulating in the area to encourage appropriate participation.



Making Friends

1. Find someone whom you think looks friendly or someone that you know has a similar interest (e.g. animals, baseball, art).
2. Say, "Hi" and introduce yourself, "My name is _____". Ask him/her, "What's your name?"
3. Start a conversation like, "What are you playing?" or "May I play too?" "What do you like to do for fun?"
4. Share something like a toy or a story. Carry a deck of cards with you (like UNO) and ask another student if they want to play.
5. Care about the person if they hurt themselves or have hurt feelings. Say something comforting, like "sometimes it's good to talk about your feelings"; or, "I can just listen and be with you".
6. Be kind and considerate to the person. Offer to help in times of need.
7. Be a good listener.
8. Take turns playing games or sharing stories.
9. Let the person know you liked talking or playing with them and would like to do it again! Let them know you care about their happiness.

Keeping Friends

1. Experience new things together to make a fun memory.
2. Build trust. Never talk about your friends behind their back and try to make sure you don't do things that hurt your friends.
3. Show interest in your friend's life. Ask how things are going or about something he/she has shared with you. Celebrate successes together and comfort each other when you experience hardships.
4. Be there even when your friend is going through tough times! That's when we all need our friends the most!
5. Be empathetic. Try to understand how the other person feels.
6. Apologize. Say you're sorry if you did something to hurt the other person, even if it wasn't done on purpose.
7. Forgive. Accept the other person's apology for doing something that hurt you. Don't hold a grudge. It hurts you to stay angry.

In Tough times

1. Remind your friend he/she is not alone ... we ALL go through hard times. They are part of each and every life.
2. If your friend is going through a sad or tough time, suggest he/she talk to a trusted adult. Tell him or her that if they need to talk or cry you are there for them. Don't feel as though you have to do the talking. Just be a good listener.
3. Encourage your friend when things aren't going well. As bad as some things seem they often get better with time. Remind your friend that no matter what happens the one thing they can count on is your friendship.
4. For things that change permanently (like when someone dies or parents get divorced) your friend can feel that he has you and others who care about him/her to rely on to help get through it. Instead of trying to cheer your friend up, just let him/her know you care. Offer extra support during holidays, birthdays or other special days. Healing takes time.



Tier 2 and 3 Strategies for students who struggle with friendships:

Tune into students who are sitting alone, or who struggle to make and keep friends.

- Complete Attwood Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule and/or Attwood Observation Schedule for Tier II and Tier III students who demonstrate friendship challenges to determine areas of need and to aid in assigning students to an appropriate Lunch Bunch, if more than one is offered.
- Explore interests with students at risk, or who may receive direct OT intervention.
- Suggest groups or clubs students may want join to forge friendships with others who have similar interests.
- Consider developing a **Lunch Bunch Program**. The “lunch bunch” strategy brings together a small group of students with and without disabilities to eat together. Emphasis is placed on learning friendship and social skills within a small context with adult supports.
- Use **coaching strategies** to support students who have limited social skills or who are reluctant to interact. Refer to *Fostering Friendships* handout. During push-in or pull-out therapy, ask a peer with common interests to join as a buddy to help foster a friendship.
- Read about and apply [*Peer Mediated Support Strategies*](#) by Bell & Carter (2013). (free, downloadable handout) Developed by Project Support & Include at Vanderbilt University.

Reinforce Week #1’s theme and content. Continue to explore:

- Volume Control Strategies – help supervisors find what works.
- Continue to demonstrate and encourage positive interaction with students. Smile, call them by name, show an interest.
- Touch base with the cafeteria supervisors at the end of the session. How do you think it went? What did you observe? Do you have any suggestions? Introduce the theme for week 3 – practicing mealtime conversation skills with the ‘Special Guest’. Note, the special guest can be brought in during Week #3 or 4.

Congratulations on completing Week #2 of the Comfortable Cafeteria Program! Move on to Week #3!

References:

- Bazyk, S. (2011). Enduring challenges and situational stressors during the school years: Risk reduction and competence enhancement. In S. Bazyk (Ed.) *Mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention for children and youth: A guiding framework for occupational therapy* (pp. 119-139), AOTA Press.
- Demir, M., & Weitekamp, L. A. (2007). I am so happy cause today I found my friend: Friendship and personality as predictors of happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 8*, 181–211.
- Demir, M., Zdemir, M., & Weitekamp, L. A. (2007). Looking to happy tomorrows with friends: Best and close friendships as they predict happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 8*, 243–271.

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