



Making Friends During Recess – For Supervisors

UNDERSTANDING FRIENDSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Research suggests that if a child has at least one friend he or she is less likely to be a victim of bullying (CASEL, 2009). Friendships are also an important source of happiness offering companionship, affection, intimacy and mutual assistance (Demir, Zdemir, & Weitekamp, 2007). Children who have friends tend to be more sociable, self-confident, cooperative and emotionally supportive than those without friends. However, some students don't have the opportunity to build lasting friendships because they move frequently, are shy or have limited social skills (Bazyk, 2011).

FOUR LEVELS OF FRIENDSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As a leading authority on the psychology of children with Asperger's Syndrome, Tony Attwood has compiled and offers valuable information on the development of friendship and how to foster friendships among children (Attwood, 2002).

These levels of friendship can be found on Tony Attwood's website:

<http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/index.php/publications/by-tony-attwood/archived-papers/75-understanding-and-teaching-friendship-skills>

Level 1: Approximately 3 to 6 years - The child learns simple turn-taking to have fun during play or games. Friendships tend to be egocentric – a friend is someone who gives you things or someone you play with. Friendship is based on proximity – children who live nearby.

Level 2: Approximately 6 to 9 years - There is an increasing understanding of the concepts of reciprocity and the give and take involved in being friends. Child considers the likes and dislikes of the other person and chooses friends on how closely the person matches their self interest, for example, in liking similar games. There is more awareness about the thoughts and feelings of others. When asked *Why is _____ your friend?* The typical response is *He lets me play the games I want to, Because she comes to my party and I go to hers or She's nice to me.*

Level 3: Approximately 9 to 13 years - The child is more aware of other people's opinions and how their own words and actions influence feelings in others. Able to demonstrate empathy resulting in careful attention to what they say and do because it may be hurtful to someone. Friendship often is based on shared experiences and interests. See stronger friendships between same-sex peers and greater durability in friendships. Children begin to value attributes such as trust, loyalty and keeping promises. When asked *Why is _____ your friend,* the typical response is *He sticks up for me and helps me with my math homework, She enjoys doing the things I like to do or I can talk to them and they listen.*

Level 4: Adolescence to adult - Peer group acceptance becomes more important than the opinions of parents. There is close sharing of feelings and other personal information as well a desire to be understood and accepted for differences. Aware of different types of friendship - from acquaintances to close friends. Able to be autonomous within a friendship. When asked *Why is _____ your friend,* the typical response is *Because we think the same way about things.*

FRIENDSHIP TAKES SKILLS!



“Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over.” [Gloria Naylor](#)

Attwood describes key social behaviors associated with friendship development. Refer to 'Understanding and Teaching Friendship Skills'

Entry Skills: How the child joins a group of peers and welcomes other children who want to be included in the activity.

Assistance: Knowing when and how to help or assist others; knowing when to ask for help.

Compliments: Providing compliments to friends at appropriate times; knowing how to respond to compliments.

Criticism: Knowing when criticism is appropriate or inappropriate. Knowing how to provide criticism and being able to tolerate criticism.

Accepting Suggestions: Being open to and incorporating the ideas of others in the activity.

Reciprocity and Sharing: Able to be equitable in conversing with another. Able to share ideas, directions and resources.
Being helpful.

Conflict Resolution: Using compromise to managing disagreements. Open to opinions of others. Tuning out and ignoring aggression or immature interactions.

Monitoring and Listening: Uses observation of the other person's nonverbals to monitor their involvement. Adjusting one's own body language to communicate interest in the other person.

Empathy: Able to recognize the feeling state of the other person and respond in an appropriate manner verbally and nonverbally.

Avoiding and Ending: Knows how to end a conversation or interaction appropriately with statements such as, 'It was fun talking with you, but I need to get to class now'.

References:

Atwood, T. (2013). Understanding and Teaching Friendship Skills. In *Tony Atwood*. Retrieved May 14, 2013, from <http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/index.php/publications/by-tony-attwood/archived-papers/75-understanding-and-teaching-friendship-skills>.

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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.

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