

Dear Counselling Corner:

Do you have any strategies to help my child develop positive connections with their peers? They are still struggling to make strong friendships this year. Thanks!

Parents who are at a loss

Dear Parents:

Thank you for asking such an important question. As we continue to support our children's growth, one important area to focus on is helping them develop strong friendship skills and a kind demeanor. Here are some practical tips to guide you in nurturing these qualities in your child:

1. **Model Kindness and Empathy:** Children learn a lot by observing their parents. Show kindness in your daily interactions, whether it's through small acts of generosity or by speaking kindly about others. When your child sees you being empathetic, they are more likely to emulate this behavior.
2. **Encourage Open Communication:** Create an environment where your child feels comfortable expressing their feelings and thoughts. This helps them understand their own emotions and develop empathy towards others. Ask open-ended questions about their day and listen actively to their responses.
3. **Teach Social Skills:** Role-playing different social scenarios can be a fun and effective way to teach your child how to interact with others. Practice greetings, sharing, taking turns, and resolving conflicts. These skills are fundamental in building and maintaining friendships.
4. **Promote Inclusive Play:** Encourage your child to play with a variety of peers. This helps them appreciate diversity and learn to be inclusive. Organize playdates or group activities that involve different children, fostering a sense of community and teamwork. Supervise and promote positive interactions to set your child up for success.
5. **Praise Positive Behavior:** Reinforce acts of kindness and good social behavior with praise. Acknowledge when your child shares, helps a friend, or shows understanding. Positive reinforcement encourages them to continue these behaviors.
6. **Read Books About Friendship and Kindness:** Stories can be powerful tools for teaching values. Choose books that highlight themes of friendship, empathy, and kindness. Discuss the stories with your child and ask them what they learned from

the characters' experiences. Some great ones can be found at: [50 Children's Books About Friendship of 2024](#)

7. **Volunteer Together:** Participating in community service or helping others in need can be a great way to teach kindness. Volunteering together not only strengthens your bond but also shows your child the importance of giving back and being compassionate.

By incorporating these practices into your daily routine, you can help your child develop the skills they need to form meaningful friendships and grow into a kind, empathetic individual. Thank you for your dedication to your child's development. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's academic, social/emotional or nutritional needs. I can be reached at hchang@sd43.bc.ca or at 604 936-4296 (Porter Street phone number).

The Counselling Corner is intended to offer some helpful ideas, encouragement and insight on a variety of topics to support your child's social and emotional learning. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns at hchang@sd43.bc.ca.

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