



Helping Your Child Be a Good Friend



Create opportunities for your child and other children to be together. Attend church regularly and invite friends over; arrange play dates, trips to events, or just times to hang out; enroll your child in a class or sign him/her up for a team or club. Watch and see what happens.

Encourage them to be an initiator and inviter to others. Role-play situations so they can learn what to say and do to reach out to others. Instead of waiting for others to invite them to play, encourage them to befriend others who may not have a friend.

Teach them to give and take. To illustrate this, toss a ball back and forth to help your child see the need to give and take in a friendship. When your child tosses the ball to you, take it and walk away. When he/she asks, “Where are you going?” come back and toss the ball some more. Then talk about it: *How did you feel when I took the ball and walked away? We can’t play catch with only one person—it takes both of us to throw the ball back and forth. A friendship takes two people. If someone makes a kind move toward us, we must make a kind move back. If someone gives us a smile, we can smile back. If someone asks if we would like to play a game, we can join in. If someone remembers our birthday, we can remember theirs. This is also true for conversation. Ask a question and then listen—both give and take.*

Train them to listen. It is good to share about ourselves; but never listening to our friend is selfish. We must take time to listen and not interrupt when he/she is sharing. To train children to listen, introduce the talking stick (a wooden spoon or stick decorated with colored tape). The one rule: whoever has the talking stick has permission to talk; all others must listen. While at the table after a meal, pass the stick to someone and allow them to share something about their day or talk about whatever they like. Don’t allow anyone to interrupt or say anything while he/she is still talking. Then pass the talking stick to another child who will talk.

Model conflict resolution. All friends will have conflict so teach them how to resolve problems. (Try to let children resolve many conflicts on their own without your interference.) Teach them how and when to say, “I’m sorry; will you forgive me?” Help them understand



what forgiveness is and isn't (forgiveness does not mean that you are not hurt or sad or what the other person did was right; forgiveness means that you are giving up your right to hurt the other person back). Role-play situations (a friend says something mean, takes something, excludes you, etc.).



Talk about what real friendship looks like. Read about David and Jonathan's friendship in 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-6; 20:12-15, 41, 42. *What are some things that David and Jonathan did to show that they were good friends?* (They were loyal to one another; they defended one another; they listened; they helped one another; they kept their promises to one another; etc.) *What would you want your friend to do for you?* (Share the Golden Rule, Matthew 7:12)

