

# ***After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers***

From ***What's the Buzz?*** A social skills enrichment programme for primary students



## **Lesson 4: being friendly**

This section highlights that no one knows your child as well as you, and because of this, no one else has such a potent influence on them. In this lesson the skills required so others are likely to see your child as friendly were explored. With this in mind, here are a few ideas to help your children practice and consolidate friendly styled behaviours.

### **Play-dates**

Most parents yearn for their children to find happiness in having a friend over to play. However, it makes no sense to do this until quite short, highly structured, one on one play-dates run with consistent success. Keep in mind that younger children require greater adult direction. Nevertheless, strategic planning, beginning at the simplest level, makes smiles possible for everyone!

#### **Level one: at home after school**

Arrange something for your child and their friend to eat and drink. Direct them to watch a television program or a short dvd and then take the friend home. A word to the wise; it may go against your grain to allow your child to watch too much television, but in this situation it takes the pressure off them to perform. In fact, the television programme is likely to be a catalyst for them to chat. Work on creating a short, structured and enjoyable play-date. Leave them both wanting more!

#### **Level two: off to the park**

Walk or drive your child and their friend to the shop. Buy something to eat and drink and visit a nearby park, bike park, skate park or playground for just thirty minutes. Then take the friend home. Again, keep the play-date short, structured and pleasantly memorable!

#### **Level three: a cook up**

Set up a visit so your child and their friend might cook something and eat the spoils afterwards. Then it's off home with the friend!

#### **Level four: at the shops**

Take your child and their friend to the local shopping centre. Depending on their age and independence, set them up with a drink and leave them to finish their drinks and do a little window shopping. Organise them to visit several stores they have an interest in and nominate a time and place to meet ready for you to drive the friend home.

#### **Level five: venture a little further**

Take your child and their friend to a place they are both likely to enjoy: the swim centre, the beach, a climb on the rocks, tadpoling, frog hunting, or some time at the bike track, anything that structures activity. Pack a snack or lunch, and be sure to tell them their play has to be brief - it's surprising how quickly so many interesting things can be found when time is at a premium!

#### **Level six: an evening dinner and a DVD**



This structured approach guarantees a win for all. Manipulate the situation so that the experience is an enjoyable experience. This may mean arranging for the little brother or sister who tends to take dominate visitors to be elsewhere for a few hours.

### **Role-play friendly and unfriendly behaviours**

A simple way to show your child what it takes to be friendly is to have some fun role playing together. Act out disgruntled, quizzical and embarrassed faces or happy, sad or shocked bodies. Role-play the ideas below and assess together which look friendly or unfriendly;

“The cat’s bum face”  
“Over the moon”  
“Cool as a cucumber”  
“As sour as grapes”  
“Out of the blue”  
“Feeling like a million dollars”  
“A face like a torn sock”  
“As happy as Larry”  
“A face like thunder”  
“The ants pants”  
“Shocked beyond belief”  
“Pleased to see you!”  
“The cat that licked the cream”  
“Worried sick”

Children quickly begin to see how their friendly or unfriendly disposition has the power to turn others on or off them.

### **Recipes for successful friendships**

Do your children know it is one thing to meet new people, but takes an entirely different set of skills to maintain a friendship? These recipes are invaluable. A good idea may be to create a poster together. This strong visual reminder may provide the supportive edge your child needs to persist with placing friendly behaviours into action.

#### **Recipe for MAKING friends**

Introduce yourself.  
Smile!  
Say your name, and look at them as you speak.  
Ask them a question about themselves.  
Listen to their answer.  
Find an interest you share and talk about it.  
Never brag, or act childish.  
Be kind by using a gentle voice and thoughtful words.  
Make the best impression you can.

#### **Recipe for KEEPING friends**

Show you care.  
Always share.  
Talk, listen and ask questions about them.  
Play together.  
Allow them to play with others too.  
Give positive feedback. Say what it is you like about them.  
Think before you speak.  
Friendships are not perfect – things will go wrong.  
When something goes wrong, always look for a way to fix it.  
Friendships change. That’s normal!

### **Play detective**

Ask your child to name a person they think gets along with others really well. As you identify children with the friendliest behaviours you immediately connect your child to the better role models. Ask them to observe how this person gets along with others and the kind of things they say and do. Ask them to discover whether they are good at turn taking, and why they get along with others so well? Emphasise the idea that this person shows friendly behaviours; the sort of qualities that others like.

### **Investigate heroes**

A good place to start is to get on line and Google! What you are likely to find is that their hero's celebrated life is actually the result of hard work and dealing with setbacks along the way. Success often has more to do with persistence and the ability to get along with others. Examine the problems they faced and how they got around them. Never underestimate the motivation children draw from this. After all, if their hero did it, so can they.

### **Investigate community clubs, groups and associations**

Despite everyone's best intentions, school is not always the easiest place for all children to find friendship. For quite a few the best source of social connection takes place outside of school where they are able to capitalise on a natural interest they can share with others. There are a myriad of clubs, groups, associations and societies within the local community worth exploring. Ideal situations are usually semi organised by adults. They foster friendship, develop interests and provide opportunities for children and adolescents to exercise their social and emotional muscle. The best place to start is at your local council. They are usually very helpful with this sort of information. Alternatively, ask friends, search the telephone directory or try a web search.

### **Practice makes perfect**

When it comes to showing friendly behaviours, practice really does help to consolidate how it is done! Using some of the ideas below encourage your child to do a friendly act showing friendly behaviours each day.

- Help bring the shopping in
- Give mum or dad a massage
- Play someone else's game
- Make someone a snack
- Offer help for a while
- Pick some flowers from the garden and give them to someone
- Say thank you
- Give a hug
- Set the table
- Clear the table
- Help with the dishes
- Ask a family member how their day has been, and listen
- Feed the pet
- Take out the garbage
- Make your bed
- Tidy up your room
- Get up in the morning without fuss and be ready on time
- Smile a lot more



"Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born."

*Anais Nin*

