



THE CATHOLIC ACADEMY
OF STAMFORD

Supporting Children with Friends and Socializing

This part of the school year can evoke a range of emotions, including teachers' final expectations, and social changes for the children. Children are learning to navigate the teacher's expectations and their own social reality in between. In the last couple of months we have noticed children advocating for themselves in a positive way. Students are noticing the difference between healthy and unhealthy friendships, including comments and treatment, and are standing up for themselves. This is what we want as we are shaping our children to be tomorrow's leaders.

How can you help your children at home? I came across a couple of wonderful articles on Child Mind Institute. The first is called Kids Who Need a Little Help to Make Friends by Rae Jacobson. The author gives tips on how to support and model friendships at home. The article states:

Building social skills

"If you notice that your child is struggling to interact with their peers, try some coaching at home. Emphasize taking turns and sharing during family playtime and explain that friends expect the same good behavior. For kids who need more intensive guidance, experts suggest using "social scripts". Social scripts are helpful for children to establish eye contact and respond to the moods of others" (Jacobson).

From the article Teaching Social Skills at Home by Gia Miller she states sneak social skills lessons into movie nights. "Try a comedy. Understanding unspoken social rules and why things are funny can help children better relate to their peers". Keep the remote handy. "It's often helpful to pause the video and to discuss what's happening in real time, help your child decode a character's actions or even pause on specific frames to point out what you notice about a character's body language or facial expressions" (Miller).

Practice during playdates

A doctor that the authors cite suggests "parents spend some time before playdates reviewing social cues. Talk with your child about what it means to be a

good host. What will your child do to make their guests feel comfortable? Have your child pick out a few games in advance. Ask your child how they'll know if guests are having a good time. Are they smiling? Laughing? let the playdate unfold as it may. Children learn from the natural consequence of their actions which is why it's so important to let them practice socializing in a warm, supportive setting" (Jacobson).

Helping shy kids

"For shy kids we want to give them opportunities to meet new kids, but we want to help bridge the transition so they aren't too uncomfortable. Planning playdates at your house first, where your child will be most at ease could support" (Jacobson).

Take your children's limit seriously

"When your child tells you what is, and isn't, okay with them, and take their requests to heart whenever possible. For example if a child says they do not like being tickled, or picked up you could say 'I hear you and I won't do it again' (Jacobson).

Supporting children from Pre-K through eighth grade with friendships and socializing can be extremely different day to day, even week to week and that is ok. But during these grade levels, it is when we need to be the most patient, because these are the ages the children's emotional development is in its prime time practice and molding into how they will interact with others in high school and beyond. Reminding the children to empathize, communicate clearly, by always having fun when they are with friends is most important. Friendships should be fun, light-hearted, and a mix of fun. But also to have friends you can be honest with and not feel overwhelmed with after being honest. If you would like more support with friendships and specific topics like social anxiety, social media, and communication disorders, Child Mind Institute online does have these articles available on their webpage. And as always, please feel free to reach out to me directly for any support.

Thank you, Mrs. Grijavla

References

Jacobson, Rae. "Kids Who Need a Little Help to Make Friends." *Child Mind Institute*, 26 Jan. 2023,

childmind.org/article/kids-who-need-a-little-help-to-make-friends/.

Miller , Gia. "Teaching Social Skills at Home." *Child Mind Institute*, 24 Sept. 2025,

childmind.org/article/teaching-social-skills-at-home/.