

*Helping
you to help
your child*

Supporting Children with Friendship Issues

Simple, actionable ideas for parents, carers
and other supporting adults



Friendship
issues are a
big deal for
our kids

Introduction

In this guide, I've shared five ideas to help you to help your child when it comes to friendship issues.

Friendship issues can feel time-consuming and frustrating to us as parents and carers but they are the biggest, most important thing going on in our little person's life. If they feel heard and held by us now, we form the basis of a strong, open, honest relationship where we can navigate the really big stuff together later on.

These ideas are geared towards younger children, but you can apply them to teens and tweens (and adults!) too with a little imagination.

Good luck!

Pooky x

Friendship Issues

Five questions to help you to help your child. Work through these questions on your own, with a co-parent or trusted friend or with your child at a time of calm. Read on for an explanation of each...

1 *Is there a regular time in your day when your child can rely on your listening ear?*



2 *Are you the kind of friend you'd like your child to be?*

3 *How can you comfort your child when they feel like their world is falling apart?*



4 *How can you take your child's mind off their worries for a little while?*

5 *When should we step back and when should we intervene?*



Just Listen

As an adult supporting a child who is going through the ups and downs that friendships bring, one of the most important things we can do is simply to listen.



- » Build a habit of listening - does your child know when they've got your attention?
- » Say less, listen more
- » Quality not quantity - your undivided attention for five minutes can make a big difference
- » Embrace the silence
- » Walk and talk
- » Listening can also happen via play, the creative arts and exploring stories

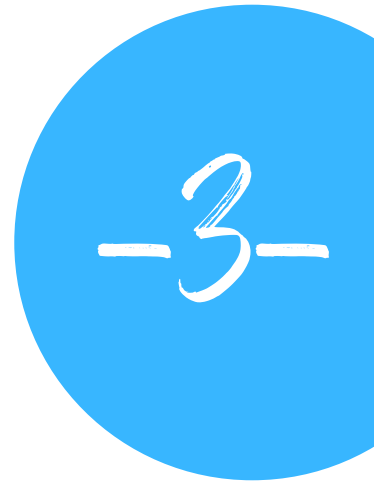
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Remember you're a role model

Many children don't spend much time thinking about the relationships of the adults around them, but even if they don't think of you as someone who has friends and the ups and downs that come with those relationships, they are observing every day how you manage challenge, how you treat your friends and what you do next if things go wrong. Remember this and try to ensure that you're role modelling behaviour you'd be proud to see in your child.

- » Consider what kind of friend you'd encourage your child to be. Are YOU that kind of friend?
- » Role model how we rise up by building up those around us, rather than breaking them down
- » Be quick to compliment, and slow to insult
- » Problem-solve out loud and as your child gets a little older, wonder aloud and ask their advice

Remember this feels huge to them



Your child's most important jobs are going to school and playing with their friends. When these things go wrong it feels massive to them. When a five-year-old has a public falling-out in the playground, this might feel equivalent to us really messing up at a really big and important meeting at work. Their problems may seem small to us, but they feel huge to them, and it's their perception that matters, not ours.

- » Think carefully about the words you use.. it's easy to exclaim 'not again!' - how will this sound?
- » Consider listening to the little things an investment in your child's future. The child who can come to you about a stolen pencil is the adolescent who can come to you about an abusive relationship
- » Imagine how you'd respond if this felt as big to you as it does them. Maybe respond that way
- » If in doubt, a cuddle will usually help



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Help them find respite from their worries

Friendship worries can weigh heavily on a child's mind and whilst there is a lot that we can do to listen and support, sometimes the most important thing we can do is to help them to shelve their worries for a little while and to think about something entirely different. Going for a walk, playing a game, dancing like no one is watching, watching a film or doing whatever else promotes a smile and closeness can help the hurts of friendship begin to heal.

- » Do something totally different for a little while, take a rest from the worry
- » Give your child permission to be happy. Laugh
- » Sometimes resting a problem can help us to solve it
- » If the conversation is going round in circles write down where you got to and bank it for later
- » You can agree a time when you'll pick it back up if your child needs that

Support from the side



Ask your child how you can help and be ready and willing to offer that support as a guide from the side. If we go steaming in and try to fix things then we often wind up making things worse and whatever happens, we have denied our child the chance to learn how to navigate these issues for themselves.

- » Think of how you taught your child to ride a bike... this is just like that, hold on long enough, then let go
- » Be there if they fall, listen, troubleshoot together, be prepared to try again
- » Ask them 'how can I help?' - often they don't want you to fix it, they just need to think out loud
- » However, we must be prepared to intervene if things have gone too far; but keep your child on side and ensure that they know exactly what is happening
- » When things are going well, be on hand to celebrate good moments - capture and keep these

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- Thank You! -

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Pooky x

