



# Being Left Out

Being rejected and ostracised can hurt. Developing friendship skills at school may help young people to navigate relationships throughout their lives.

## Developing friendship skills

The shift from home, where they are valued and loved, to school, where not everyone gets along, is a challenge all children face.

Learning friendship skills is the basis of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is highly predictive of success in work and relationships in adult life.

Ideally children use school as a way to broaden their relationships, and this sets them up for being able to work with and relate to a variety of people during their adult years.

It is a strong human desire to belong. Belonging protects us and lessens anxiety. Understandably some children think that 'if I can just replicate that close caring relationship I have with Mum or Dad with one or two close special friends at school, all will be fine'.

However, becoming reliant on only a few friends has its dangers. Most people connect and reconnect with friends as they move through their lives.

Learning to cope with the ebb and flow of human relationships while remaining true to yourself gives people confidence and courage. At times, we all need to have the confidence to endure setbacks in friendships and the courage to be ourselves.

## How parents can help children develop friendship skills

Parents can:

- Encourage friendships outside school.
- Model having a range of friends and how to meet new people.
- Increase social activities for the family with a range of people.
- Keep in touch with extended family members.
- Encourage the idea of being friends with an array of people rather than just being close to a few people.

Consider going through a list of your child's classmates with them and identifying the different types of friends. If someone is rejecting or ostracising them, you can explain that there is no point trying to push friendship upon people who are rejecting it. Tell your child that sometimes you need to take a break—when you back off from people, they can move towards you. Try to help identify a few more people to play with and become better friends with.



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Sometimes children are traumatised and find it hard to link up with new friends. They feel so emotional their thinking gets stuck. To change their actions, they need help from parents and teachers. This may include identifying who is good to play what with, how to diversify friendships, and help to depersonalise rejections.

Some children want to cling to the idea of having a 'special' or 'best' friend and while this can seem a lovely outcome, it can be a problem too. By narrowing friendships down to a select group of special people they often won't develop a range of friends or learn how to relate with different types of people. If their 'special friend' leaves that area, they will be devastated.

## How parents can help children deal with rejection

- Help your child realise that it's a fact of life that not everyone will want to be friends.
- Talk about times when you wanted to be friends with someone but they didn't want to be your friend.
- Repeat the importance of having a range of friends in different settings.
- Sometimes it is helpful to say, 'there are 8 billion people on this planet, don't let one of them ruin your day'.

