



Schools Counselling Partnership

Supporting children, families and schools

Help your child build Emotional Intelligence

Returning to school some children can find it difficult to pick up from where they left off especially with friendships. It might feel like starting all over again or coming back into a welcoming group of friends, others may struggle to get along or to find other kids who share their interests. Some children have or make a best friend, some wish they could. Here's a few things to help your child with their social skills and work through issues with friends or peers.

How parents can help:

- Listen when he has peer challenges, which all kids do. If you tell him what to do, you imply that he is incompetent, and you aren't helping him learn. Instead, help him to clarify his feelings, and to problem solve the issue.
- Don't take sides when she fights with her friends. Listen to her views and empathize with her feelings but resist the impulse to demonize the other child. If you suspect that your child is being unfair, try wondering with her about the other child's point of view, but again be careful not to blame your child
- Help her learn how to express her needs without attacking the other person. This is a challenge for all of us, so kids need our guidance, and to practice.
- Make it a habit to acknowledge and reflect feelings instead of dismissing them. Often, we parents have such a hard time seeing our child in pain that we get angry at the other child. We say things like: *"He's not a good friend to you. Let it go and find a new friend. Good riddance!"* But that doesn't help the child at all. Comments that tell our kids to just get over someone they've cared about, or a hurt they've suffered, simply dismiss our child's legitimate feelings and keep the child stuck in hurt and anger. When you instead keep your own upset in check and empathize with your child's feelings: *"Having your friend say something like that to you could really hurt."* he gets to feel them fully. That might mean he gets more upset momentarily, but once he gets a chance to feel the emotions, they begin to dissipate. Once he feels better, he can do better problem-solving, whether that means talking with the friend, or ending the friendship.
- Help him to think through various problem-solving options. Often, once kids work through their feelings, they know what action to take. *"I'm not mad at Sam anymore and I miss playing with him. I'm going to knock on his door."* But if he doesn't, help him brainstorm. Sometimes he'll need help from you to know how to say no in a way that keeps both his friend and his integrity.
- If your child is having a hard time, consider what kind of support will help. For instance, some children don't pick up on social cues and need help to learn specific skills, like how to join a group. Others don't listen to their friend's ideas, or physically get into each other's space. Observe your child as he or she plays with another child and see if you can pinpoint what is going wrong. Later, without blame or shame, act out a similar scenario with stuffed animals and ask your child what the characters should do. Make it funny to defuse any tension. Reading books about social skills with your child can also be very helpful, as long as your child feels you're partnering with her to support her, rather than trying to "fix" her. There are some good books for kids available online.

Sometimes we could all do with someone to talk to. If you would like to meet Araminta for a confidential and non-judgemental chat about you, your child, or any other worries, she is available on Wednesdays 9-10am. You can call/text Araminta on 07368-365723 or email her at araminta@schools counsellingpartnership.co.uk

The Schools Counselling Partnership is working to improve the emotional wellbeing of children, parents and staff by working with the whole school community.