



Supporting young people on the autism spectrum with... Friendships

FRIENDSHIP IS ABOUT:

- | giving and receiving positive social reinforcement
- | spending time together
- | sharing common interests
- | sometimes being the leader in social situations
- | sometimes being the follower
- | feeling accepted by a peer group
- | showing respect for others
- | learning to cooperate

Help the young person on the autism spectrum to...

- | learn what a friend is
- | understand their own emotions, as well as other people's emotions
- | understand the rules of social interaction
- | know what to do when things don't go their way
- | understand social cues and know what to do
- | role play different social situations
- | find like-minded friends
- | participate in extra-curricular activities they're interested in

And offer support when...

- | they want some time alone
- | they want to talk about their special interests
- | they are happy to not have friends
- | they want to have a friend over

Making and maintaining friendships

For many young people on the autism spectrum, making friends and maintaining friendships can be difficult to understand and navigate. It can also vary amongst individuals, depending on age and level of development.

- | Some young people may have one close friend or a small group of friends
- | Some young people may think they have friends by association i.e. the student they sit next to in class or on the bus trip
- | Some young people may regularly seek out friendships whenever opportunities present themselves
- | Some young people may be comfortable with their own company and limited social interaction

Each young person on the autism spectrum may approach the concept of friendship differently. Ensure you take the time to explore their strengths and interests and find out what friendships they would like to develop. Some young people need support developing friendships and may have difficulties with their social interaction, communication and behaviour. The important thing to remember is that friendships come in many different shapes and sizes and will vary from young person to young person.





hello

Choose skill

E.g. Saying hello to peers

Learn the skill

Use a social story to explain that when someone says hello to you, it's polite to say hi back to them
Perhaps make a video to show saying hello to a peer

Practise the skill

Practise with a parent/teacher or therapist

Role play the skill

Role play saying hello to parents and extended family members
Find a peer who is happy to practise the skill

Try the skill with other people

Practise in the community and at school

What's the next step?

Choose a new skill to learn



Some helpful tips

- Learn specific social skills
- Identify and explore special interests
- Use video modelling
- Use visual supports
- Use social stories to help support the understanding of social situations
- Identify your child's motivators or rewards
- Work with the school to develop a plan to teach the rules of social interaction and friendship

The home-school partnership

A healthy respectful home school relationship is so important for supporting young people on the spectrum. Regular opportunities to meet and discuss both positive and challenging aspects of schooling can help keep communication channels open and transparent.

SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR THE MEETINGS:

Prepare - have key points to discuss

- gather information
- consider a support person attending with you

Meet - be confident in discussing issues and strategies
- remain objective and seek to be solution focused

Action - be clear about your next steps and actions following the meetings

If issues continue to occur, ensure you explore other communication channels to discuss your concerns.

The Positive Partnerships Planning Matrix is a great tool that can be used to support conversations about how to best support your child.

To learn more about how to complete a planning matrix and download a template visit www.positivepartnerships.com.au

You will also find exclusive online content, factsheets and information about our upcoming workshops.