

Parent/Carer Information

Why teach relationships?

A child's view of their school experience is inextricably tied to the relationships they were able to establish. These include relationships with teachers and other adults as well as relationships involving older or younger students. However, the most profound relationships existing within school are friendship groups.

Friends are a critical component in a successful school experience. Strong friendships provide support and permission to have fun. They are a significant contributor to a child's resilience. As children age they become even more reliant on friends as a source of advice and acknowledgment of who they are.

Children are generally willing to make friends readily with others, however not all children have the necessary skills to maintain those friendships in times of tension and conflict. They can be taught to speak and act in ways that draw others towards them, rather than turning them away. Many children display a competitive nature during play. How they treat others during the game, or after they have won or lost, can influence the way others see them, either for the better or worse.

Students who are easy to get along with, supportive and encouraging of others and fair in their interactions with their peers are more likely to maintain positive friendships. Students with good relationship skills can move from one group to another, confidently ask to join in with others and are able to cope with occasional rejection.

About Keeping Friends

This module supports children in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes enabling them to make friends more readily and maintain those friendships. Keeping Friends provides children with opportunities to discuss different types of friendship, the importance of friendships and how to play well together.

Keeping Friends is underpinned by the premise that resilient children have a broad range of supportive networks as opposed to a single best friend. They are able to move from group to group as the situation arises without relying on the presence of only one other student to influence the quality of their day.

Parents/Carers can assist their children by encouraging them to play with many different children, hence strengthening their social capacity and ability to cope. The following is a list of key behaviours parents can encourage in their children to help promote friendship skills:

- o Talking with others during play
- o Taking a genuine interest in others
- o Smiling often
- o Providing help to others
- o Offering encouragement
- o Being willing to share with others
- o Learning to move graciously into or out of a group

Benefits for my child

All participating students benefit from the Peer Support Program by:

- o Identifying qualities of friends
- o Broadening their friendship base
- o Recognising the importance of friendship
- o Becoming more welcoming of others
- o Engaging in positive play

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Questions and answers

What is the Peer Support Program?

The Peer Support Program provides a fun and engaging environment for young people to address issues such as bullying, relationships, and self image. Modules are designed to equip young people with skills to deal proactively with life experiences, develop a sense of self worth and belonging, and to encourage taking responsibility for decisions and actions.

How does the Peer Support Program work?

Trained Peer Leaders facilitate activities with small groups of younger students. A teacher supervises each group which includes: two Peer Leaders and multi age groups of eight to ten younger students.

How can I support the Peer Support Program in my child's school?

Discuss with your child the activities, concepts and understandings they are developing each week. This helps to foster a positive connection between school and home.