

FRIENDS



■ **Saying YES! to Friends**

Help your child say YES! to friends by getting him/her to understand the elements of a healthy friendship, to see their own great qualities they have to offer in friendships and to imagine those friendships in their lives. The following information may help you create a positive environment for your child to explore developing friendships.

■ **What does friendship mean?**

Ask your child to describe all the elements of a relationship and to define what friendship actually means. Coach them to uncover qualities like having similar interests, enjoying spending time together, knowing what each other likes and dislikes, respecting each other's differences, and treating each other how he/she would want to be treated. This is a great opportunity for you to teach your child about relationships. It also serves as a method to foster open communication between and your child about how they understand the world around them.

■ **Imagining a friendship**

Ask your child to consider what he/she would want in a friend. What kinds of activities would they do together? Where would they go? How close/far would they live from each other? How would they travel to see each other? Would a new friend be a boy or a girl? What similarities might there be between them? What differences might there be? This is an excellent opportunity to subtly teach your child the power of imagination. Imagination or visualization registers similarly in the brain as real life and it can help your child prepare him/herself to develop friendships when the opportunity arises. You can work with this visualization technique to help your child envision resolving a conflict or a disagreement with others as well.

■ **What makes your child a good friend?**

Ask your child what he/her has to offer other children. Coach your child into discovering the beautiful qualities that he/she has that other children might like. For example, caring deeply for animals would be great for another child who has pets, or being good at sports means, you can spend hours on the basketball court at the playground. Often times, we focus a lot on reducing negative behaviors associated with ADHD that cause our children to be disruptive and difficult. In the process, we forget about promoting the positive behaviors that make our children beautiful beings. This exercise helps remind your child (and you!) that he/she has many positive behaviors that don't need to be changed and that others will like.

■ **Teach you child to smile!**

Get your child to laugh and smile! We all love people who look happy, whether we are adults or children. We are naturally drawn to smiles and laughter! Remind your child of something funny or cheerful before he or she leaves for school or when they are about to spend time with other children. Bring on your child's natural smile!

Having too few friends is hard on your child and on you as a parent who feels for his or her child's loneliness. Having ADHD does not mean not having friends. It means teaching the basics of friendships that might come easily to other children so that you and your child can nurture new and emerging friendships! Consider it a practice and start practicing!

- by Dr. Amanda Wintink, PhD, Life Coach