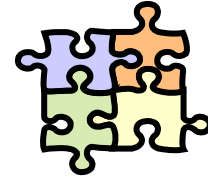


-Counselor's Corner-

Hot Topics for Parents:

#2 Friendship



With the beginning of the new year, this is a perfect time for students to think about the friendships they currently have, and possibly the new friendships they would like to make. Every child needs a few good friends or a small group to call his or her own. Sometimes children need to learn how to handle social situations that occur at home, at school, or in the community. As a parent, you can help your child form healthy friendships in many ways.

- 1. Provide experiences with friends by planning playtimes or arranging get-togethers.** Be prepared to supervise or at the very least provide a structure to facilitate play, however, when children get into disagreements let them try to problem solve first. If additional help is needed, your presence will be valuable.
- 2. Observe your child at play with others and give feedback about what you see.** Use praise when friendly behaviors occur, "I like the way you shared with Sarah," or, "I like the way you used helpful words to work out that disagreement on the phone." Identify problems and suggest solutions. "You are not being nice to your guest. You must let her have a turn on the computer." Also provide reassurance when friends act in unfriendly ways.
- 3. Engage in family activities that provide an opportunity for your child to be in social situations.** Doing things with other families will give your child a chance to interact with adults and children of mixed ages. The bond you build within your household now can give your child the courage to resist temptation in the form of peer pressure later.
- 4. Try not to label your child.** Instead of thinking of your child as shy, quiet, or a loner, reassure him or her as you meet new people together that it's alright to take a few moments to warm up to someone you've just met. Children of all personality types have the ability to create bonds with others they feel comfortable with.
- 5. If a friendship problem seems to exist, look for reasons for it.** Once you pinpoint why your child is having a particular problem, you can help him or her take steps to change his or her behavior. For example, is your son having difficulty with others because he seems to be bossy and aggressive in his play? Discuss with him what you've observed and how the other children feel about his actions. Give concrete suggestions for change.
- 6. Try to set a good example.** Your child will try to be just like you. Talking on the phone, shopping, playing games, or doing other things with people are all situations that provide your child with a model for behavior. Reflect on your own actions, are you gossiping on the phone

about someone else? Do you try to control what activities you do with friends? Do you speak poorly about someone you've had a disagreement with at work?

7. Sometimes it is helpful to role play and act out possible social situations before they occur. Teach your child conversation skills before they occur. Conversation skills can include saying hello, introducing yourself or saying a person's name so it can be remembered to help them feel special. Also teach skills to help your child be well liked by others such as practicing compliments, listening to other persons, or asking polite questions.

**As always I am here to assist with any concerns you have about the development of your child. Please feel free to contact me with questions or if you would like feedback about your student's performance. My email is jbutler@mpcsd.org ☺