



Rifka Schonfeld **STRATEGIES**

THE NEWSLETTER FOR OPTIMUM SUCCESS

TIPS ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

Need Help Making Friends?

Dear Readers,

This week's newsletter will discuss the topic of helping your child make friends and learning how to socialize...

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QUESTION:

My daughter came home from school the other day and told me that she has no friends and that nobody likes her. I was devastated to hear that. What steps can I take to get my daughter to make friends?

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ANSWER:

It's heart wrenching when you hear your child in pain, especially when it comes to social interactions. Every parent has experienced this ostracism themselves on the playground or in school. I'm sure you wish you could make friends for your daughter yourself and protect her from them painful emotions she is feeling. Unfortunately, no matter how much you would like to step in, you just can't make friends for her.

Take into account that some children need help developing social skills such as empathy, problem-solving, negotiating, cooperation, and communication skills before they are ready to make true friends. There are, however, some ways that you can help your daughter gain confidence and have an easier time making friends:

- **Create many opportunities for socializing.** Like anything else, the more you do it, the better you become at socializing. Host friends for playdates or lunch. Consider putting together a carpool so that your child can have a chance to talk to other children even on the way to school. If finances allow, sign her up for a group activity such as dance, drama, or art. Even just heading to the park with a few friends on a Sunday is great opportunity for socializing. Giving children a lot of unstructured time to play is important because they learn the social skills they need in order to keep playing and having fun.
- **Model good socialization.** When you go to the store, greet the cashier. Strike up a friendly conversation with your neighbor. Talk to the other mothers on the playground. When you show your daughter the power of a few small words, she will be less intimidated to conduct conversations with new people. Plus, you will be giving her tips on how to make friends by doing the same yourself!
- **Stay balanced.** As painful as it is to watch your child feel isolated, you must maintain a calm countenance. You have to keep this moment in perspective – every person has her ups and downs socially – and this is just a bump in the road for your daughter. Empathize with her and show her that you care about her pain, but don't go overboard. That will only cause her to wallow in her grief.
- **Praise the positive.** When you see your daughter acting in a positive way, let her know. If you see her introduce herself to a new person or walk up to a group of her peers in the park, tell her when you get home, "I'm so proud of the way you

were comfortable enough to play with those girls.” Noticing and pointing out her positive interactions will help her understand how things can go right in a social context.

- **Help her open up.** Listen carefully to your daughter’s concerns and try not to minimize her anxieties. When you discuss the specific things that make her anxious, you may be able to correct some of the misunderstandings or misconceptions on her part. You will also be able to guide her towards a better interaction in the future.

While you can’t make friends for your daughter, you can provide social opportunities and instill skills that will assist her on the road to friendship. The best thing you can do: be her friend! Listen, empathize, and give her confidence to brave a new day.



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