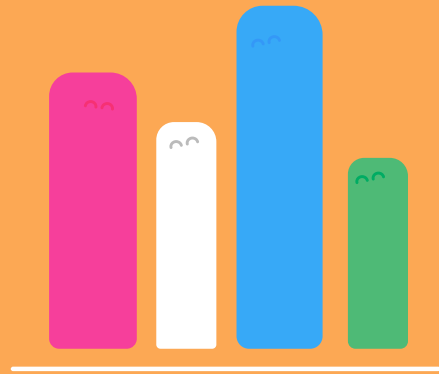


1ST & 2ND CLASS

# Parent Support Sheets – Lesson 6: Friends



## Lesson Summary:

The aim of this lesson is to learn to recognise what makes a good friend and to become more aware of how feeling safe with others feels. Children explore the characteristics of 'healthy friendships', what makes a good friend, what they look for in a friend, and how a good friend makes them feel. They learn to identify what is okay and what is not okay in friendships. They carry out activities to explore what actions make a good friend, when they have been a good friend to others, and when others have been good friends to them.

## Try It At Home Activity: 'Friendship Flowers'

In this 'Try It At Home' activity, children are asked to think about the learning from class today about what makes a good friend and how to be a good friend. They are now asked to write or draw three actions which build friendship, so they can be reminded of the practical things needed for friendship. They are also asked to write or draw three characteristics (e.g. kind) which might build friendship, so they can think of traits to look for in a friend.

To encourage your child to reflect on what they did in class, you could ask them why they chose the actions or characteristics they chose and what experiences led them to choose these. Perhaps you could share with them what things are important to you in a friendship!



Scan here for  
'Try it at Home'  
activities!

## Dr. Malie's Top Tips:

- Nurturing friendship throughout our lives is paramount to our wellbeing, which is where you play a crucial role for your child. According to an RTÉ Radio One piece by Ruth Kennedy based on a 'Today with Claire Byrne' podcast with me on friendship: <https://www.rte.ie/lifestyle/living/2022/0221/1282074-dr-malie-coyne-on-spotting-the-signs-of-a-toxic-friendship/>

"Friendships and human connection is the key to our emotional and physical health. We learn about who we are through our relationships. Humans are so deeply social and our most joyful and sad moments derive from a feeling of belonging with close others. Our sense of joy, self-worth and belonging develops in our early relationships with our family, which over time progresses to the close bonds we form with the friends we choose. Friendships provide us with the crucial social support we need to survive in the world.

The benefits of friendship last longer than the good times we have with them. There is solid science behind why you like someone and want to spend time with them. When you have a good laugh with someone, you feel like the very best version of yourself. And why is that? Because it releases your feel-good brain chemicals. When we are born to our mothers we have a release of oxytocin in our brains, which is our love hormone. Well, that gets released when you're really close to a good friend, and also you have endorphins which can act as a pain reliever and serotonin which is an anti-depressant. So, loads of really good chemicals are released when you're with somebody that you're enjoying spending time with."

- In helping your child to nurture friendships, Author Velloso's four elements needed for friendships to grow are a good guide for parents to be aware of. These include:
  1. close physical proximity.
  2. regular interactions.
  3. a compatible outlook on life.
  4. and a shared commitment to being there for each other.
- In her book 'We Should Get Together: The Secret to Cultivating Better Friendships', Velloso calls these factors 'seeds of connection', because when they are all present, a healthy friendship can bloom. However, if any of these components are lacking due to circumstance or not being actively nurtured, the greater the likelihood of failure.
- Use your own experience of friendship to model to your child how to create and build friendships. For example, talk to them about someone new you met and how you started up a conversation. Children will see that it takes action to make a friend.
- Talking about maintaining friendships with your children is beneficial, so that they're reminded that friendships involve a level of effort and commitment (e.g. enjoying experiences together, staying in touch, and doing nice things for one another). Your child really benefits from your support in helping them to arrange to meet friends outside of school, as well as emphasising the importance of kindness to others.
- It may be worth reducing the significance of a 'best friend' from the child's perspective. Sometimes there is pressure from peers to rank friendships at this age. This can cause upset if a child feels they don't have a best friend. This can also be a problem if your child falls out with a friend or the friend isn't around. Remind your child of the benefit of them having a few friends; they don't need to just have one.

### Resources:

To learn more about friendship, check out the following sources:

- Here is a comprehensive list of 24 picture books about how to be a good friend:  
<https://teachingwithchildrensbooks.com/books-about-friendship/>
- RTÉ published a recent report on how children value friendship in school:  
<https://www.rte.ie/news/education/2020/12/11/1183726-school-report/>
- Here are 12 brilliant evidence-based tips on helping your child to make friends:  
<https://parentingscience.com/kids-make-friends/>