



HOW IMPORTANT ARE PEER RELATIONSHIPS?

by Caitlin Castro, Education Programs Specialist-Grant Coordinator

Peer relationships are one of the most important factors in social and emotional development and in turn can provide a way in which children learn empathy, cooperation, and team work. Successfully navigating the world of peers can prove to be difficult for our children. All children and teenagers greatly benefit from the emotional support friends provide, but as in all relationships, it can be stressful when peer conflict or social stressors arise. Our jobs as parents and educators are to equip our children with tools and strategies they can use to successfully develop healthy friendships. Role-playing, modeling, and engaging in deep conversations with our children can prove to be very helpful in teaching our kids what positive vs. negative friendships look like. As parents and educators, having an open line of communication with our kids helps develop trust and allows children to have a safe space to feel heard and seen when inevitable social pressures arise. Positive peer relationships in a child's life can greatly attribute to a healthy and successful life!

EARLY LEARNING

Children receive so many benefits when they interact with peers from an early age. It advances their language and communication, helps them achieve developmental milestones, and better prepares them for school. Play is the best way children learn at this age and playing with peers provides new learning opportunities that adults just cannot replicate. They can engage in more authentic, imaginative play with someone who thinks and communicates on a similar level. Whether formally in a childcare center or informally in a play group, early socialization with peers is crucial for setting the foundation for a child's social skills.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Once a child enters elementary school, their social world begins shifting from the family unit to peers. As children spend more time with each other in classrooms and extracurricular activities, peer relationships become more important than they were in earlier years. Children learn how to make and keep a friend, collaborate with others for a common goal, and negotiate both positive and negative peer influences. These relationships provide so much more than just the opportunity to hone their early social skills, however. They provide children with a greater sense of belonging and purpose. This can buffer them from the effects of stress and help them to be more excited to engage and learn in school.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle school is a huge transition for our students. They are faced with new routines, new friends, and new challenges. Prepare your kids by having conversations about their values and goals now. Model your decision making process by talking through decisions that you've made and how they align with the things you value. One of the most important decisions your student will make is the friendships they choose. By knowing their values and goals they will be able to better spot students who share those same goals. The friends we chose are important. We learn so much from the people we share our lives with.

HIGH SCHOOL

High school is full of pressure for our students. One way that we can help them is by helping them navigate the friendships that bring out the best in them and the friendships that they may have outgrown. Reflect with your student on the friendships they cherish and why. Who makes them feel valued? Who brings out their creativity? Who is in their corner and shows with their words and actions that they care? We want our teens to have peers who bring out the best in them and help them face challenges.

STAGES IN PEER RELATIONSHIPS

by Mabel Filpo
Community Programs Specialist

Peer relationships are important for people of all ages, as they help individuals to enhance their emotional intelligence skills, gain a sense of belonging, and receive support and guidance. Fostering peer relationships allows children to be involved with learning effective communication skills, setting boundaries, and seeking help from trusted adults. Here are some ideas to nurture peer relationships:

Be approachable: Smile, make eye contact, and be open to interacting with others. This can help to create a positive first impression and make it easier to start a conversation.

Communicate effectively: Listen actively, express yourself clearly, and use appropriate body language. This can help to build trust and understanding in a relationship.

Show interest: Ask questions, pay attention, and be genuinely interested in how others feel and what they say.

Be yourself: Authenticity is key, people appreciate and respect honesty and genuineness.

Show empathy: Try to understand and relate to others' feelings and perspectives. Empathy can help to create a sense of connection and belonging.

Resolve conflicts constructively: Model and provide opportunities for your child to manage disagreements and conflicts in a calm and proactive manner.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

by Melissa Hartnett
Education Programs Specialist

A 2021 developmental psychology study on social connectedness and the adolescent brain suggests that the time of adolescence may "be critical for the development of social emotional and cognitive skills that influence later mental health outcomes." Supportive peer relationships (those of high perceived quality) during adolescence "contribute to the sense of self..social competence and [positive] academic performance" while a lack of supportive peer relationships can be linked to negative outcomes such as "social withdrawal, risk-taking behavior...juvenile delinquency and long-term mental health consequences."

The HCPS/Frameworks Middle School project is so important because it teaches Community Building Sessions™ (CBS). CBS is a strategy to enhance classroom culture and build students' social and emotional competencies through purposeful activities. Research shows that kids with higher emotional intelligence have better self-management skills and better overall mental health which leads to better relationships. Facilitating CBS with fidelity in 6th grade classrooms is one powerful way to foster positive peer relationships to set them up for future success.

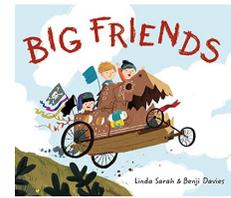
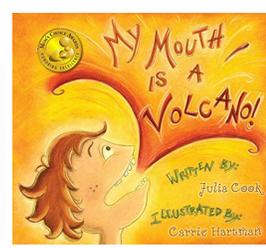
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.589403/full>

To access additional free resources or purchase resources for home, classroom, or office use, please visit our website:



www.myframeworks.org

MAKE AN IMPACT



RESOURCES AND READINGS

by Eddie Underwood
Education Programs Specialist

The following are some resources to help with fostering positive peer relationships. The following links provide access to an article and worksheets on building healthy relationships:

- <https://positivepsychology.com/health-y-relationships-worksheets/>
- [https://www.mylemarks.com/store/c24/Friendships and Relationships Worksheets.html](https://www.mylemarks.com/store/c24/Friendships%20and%20Relationships%20Worksheets.html)

The books above are a great way to supplement teaching and build EQ in children.

Peer pressure is something everyone will face in school. You have to really go by what you think is the right thing to do. Turn to the Friends you trust the most when you are put in a compromising situation. If your friends are making the wrong decision, then turn to your parents.

Madisen Beaty

www.idlehearts.com

Frameworks
HEAD AND HEART
Luncheon

CONNECT WITH US:

- f Frameworks of Tampa Bay
- @Frameworks_TB
- in Frameworks of Tampa Bay
- @FrameworksofTampaBay
- Frameworks of Tampa Bay