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ASD Tips

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Friendships

Friendships can be a difficult area to negotiate, and even for us as typical adults our friendships change and metamorphous, some quickly, some so slowly that we don't notice the changes at first. As we grow older and wiser as people, so do our ideas and understanding of friendships grow and change. Unfortunately this is not so true for ASD people, for as is the nature of ASD, change is difficult to understand and comprehend.

As we teach friendship skills, we also need to teach that friendships grow **and** change, and so we need to guide them through the different stages of friendships as some friendships wane and others become much closer. This can be taught if you have established a mentor relationship with the student.

Tips on teaching friendship skills

Teach the child:

- Which behaviours signal that another person is available for friendship, eg positive remarks from that person, physical proximity, positive comments directed toward the ASD person, offers of help
- How to respond to these signals
- Which behaviours signal that he/she is available for friendship. For example, positive remarks to that person, offer of help with maths, finding a classroom, etc.
- Conversational starters
- To understand the differences between good natured teasing and bullying and harassment. This requires them looking at the "Big Picture" to see what is happening around them. Provide them with the skills to 'investigate' what happened before, during and after to help them work out which one it is.
- That friendship comes in different shapes and forms.



- That different friendships bring different benefits and pleasures. Use your own experiences and talk about the kinds of friendships you experience. You have a friend at the gym where you work out together, but you don't necessarily see her socially outside this arena. You have a friend with whom you have long chats and cups of coffee with. You have a friend, a work colleague that you share experiences with, but you don't see socially outside of work.
- That we have many acquaintances but not many true friends
- That true friendships develop over time
- That you can have:
 - Activity friends
 - Special interest friends
 - Intellectual friends
 - Go – to friends
 - Close to home friends
 - School friends/music friends, horse riding friends etc.

