



Dear Students and Families,

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Friendship counseling is an up and coming area of focus in the counseling world so here are some tips and tricks for you to work on with your students.

### **1. Teach Kindness and Empathy Early**

Teaching students to be kind and empathetic is one of the best ways to encourage positive friendships. First, children have to know their own feelings. Parents can help their children understand appropriate feeling words and validate their feelings. This then allows them to connect with their peers and show compassion and respect. Simple ways to practice would be storytime with a message, asking kids how situations made them feel, or sharing how life events made you feel.

### **2. Encourage Teamwork and Cooperation**

Teamwork teaches children how to communicate, share, and cooperate—all key ingredients for building friendships. Consider what games could be played at home in which there could be an added element of cooperation like building a fort together or working as a team to complete a recipe. Help children learn their strengths and support them in areas of growth. Another element to consider is adding a common enemy like the floor in 'the floor is lava' or the balloon is a simple game of 'keep it up'. Helping children come together to solve a common problem can work wonders for cooperation as long as it doesn't make another person be excluded which could lead to bullying.

### 3. Address Bullying Early

Bullying is another area in which early intervention can go far and there needs to be some education to help. First students need to understand what bullying is and isn't. "A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue" by Julie Cook can be helpful. She teaches children to be a Danger Ranger, Problem solver, decide if it is a 'now or later' problem to tell about, and to "mind your own beeswax". Helping children have language to differentiate can be very empowering.

Think about how you can teach your child(ren) to have difficult conversations. Teaching them to use the voice with their friends first before telling a teacher can be helpful at empowering them to stand up for themselves. Considering practicing simple role plays can help every child as they get older. Strategies like a complaint sandwich (complaint between two positive comments) can be useful for any age.

### 4. Be a Good Friend Yourself

It's important to have a good example of healthy friendships. When parents can show they have quality friendships that don't use language of bullying or exclusion, children will tend to do the same. As a parent, you can set the tone by creating an environment where all members of the household are accepted and show them how to welcome neighbors and make new friends as well as set boundaries for when people are being unhealthy and explain in kid-friendly language the reasoning.

**Here are some handouts for additional ideas:**

In the classroom: [click here](#)

From a teachers perspective: [click here](#)

On collaboration: [click here](#)

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