



Together for Neurodiversity

Empowering Futures, Embracing Differences

A Young Person's Guide to Friendships

What Friendship Means?

Friendship is one of the most important parts of life. Friends are the people we choose to spend time with, share our interests with, and feel safe around. A true friend will accept you for who you are, without asking you to change. They will make you feel valued, supported, and included. Friendship doesn't have to look the same for everyone. Some people enjoy having a large group of friends they see often, while others are happiest with just one or two close friends who understand them deeply. Both are completely okay – there is no “right” way to do friendship.

Key points:

- Friends are people you choose to spend time with because it feels good.
- Good friends are kind, respectful, and make you feel safe.
- Friendships can be big groups or just one or two people.
- Quality matters much more than quantity.

Making Friends

Making friends can sometimes feel challenging, especially if you're shy, unsure what to say, or worried about what others might think. The truth is, most friendships begin with something small. A smile, a wave, or sitting next to someone can be the start of a new connection. You don't need to be the funniest, most outgoing, or most popular person to make friends – being kind and genuine is enough. Think about the things you enjoy most, such as hobbies, games, or activities. These are great ways to find people with similar interests, because shared activities give you something easy to talk about.

Tips for making friends:

- Find people who enjoy similar hobbies, clubs, or games.
- Start small – say hello, sit nearby, or offer to help.
- Ask to join in with activities instead of waiting to be invited.
- Show interest in what others like and listen carefully.
- Give the friendship time to grow instead of rushing it.

Starting a Conversation

Conversations are like doors – once you open one, you can step into a new friendship. Starting a conversation doesn't need to be complicated. You don't have to come up with something amazing to say. Often, a simple question or friendly comment is all it takes to show someone that you're interested in talking. The important thing is to give it a try, even if it feels awkward. The more you practise, the easier it will get.

Conversation starters you can try:

- “Hi, how are you today?”
- “Do you want to sit with me at lunch?”
- “What are you playing/reading/watching?”
- “Can I join in?”
- “That looks cool – where did you get it?”

Tips for conversations:

- Ask open questions that need more than yes/no answers.
- Listen carefully and show you are paying attention.
- Smile or nod to show interest.
- Don't worry if there are pauses – silence is normal sometimes.
- Remember, practice makes progress.

Respecting Personal Space

Everyone has an invisible bubble around them called personal space. Respecting this bubble is very important, because it helps people feel safe and comfortable. Even if you feel close to someone, they may not always want a hug or to sit too close. Good friends respect each other's boundaries, and checking before touching or borrowing something shows that you care.

How to respect personal space:

- Stand about an arm's length away unless invited closer.
- Ask before hugging, touching, or borrowing things.
- Notice body language – if someone steps back, they want more space.
- Respect when someone says they want time alone.
- Remember that different people may need different amounts of space.

Handling Rejection

Rejection is when someone doesn't want to play, talk, or be close friends. It can feel painful or disappointing, but everyone experiences it at some point. Rejection doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you – it just means that person has made their own choice. What matters is how you respond. Staying calm and respectful shows maturity, and it leaves you free to try again with someone else.

Ways to handle rejection:

- Remind yourself, “It’s not about me – it’s their choice.”
- Stay calm and walk away instead of arguing.
- Say: “Okay, maybe another time,” to show respect.
- Try with someone else – there are always more opportunities.
- Focus on the people who are kind, friendly, and welcoming.



What To Do If...

Friendships don't always go smoothly. Sometimes things happen that you didn't expect. Having a plan for tricky situations helps you feel more confident and less stressed.

If someone says no: Respect their answer and don't keep asking.

If someone teases you: Stay calm, walk away, and tell a trusted adult.

If a friend upsets you: Explain how you feel kindly ("I felt hurt when...").

If you don't know what to say: Take a deep breath, smile, and try one of your conversation starters.

If someone pressures you to do something wrong: Say "No, I don't want to," and talk to an adult you trust.

Being a Good Friend

Friendship works best when both people put effort in. Being a good friend doesn't mean always agreeing or doing everything someone else wants. It means treating each other with respect, kindness, and care. Think about what you would want from a friend, and try to be that for others.

Ways to be a good friend:

- Be kind and supportive, even when things are tough.
- Listen when they talk, and don't interrupt.
- Share fairly – games, food, and time together.
- Say sorry if you make a mistake.
- Respect their feelings, choices, and boundaries.
- Celebrate their successes as well as your own.



Growing Friendships

Friendships don't just happen – they grow with time, effort, and care. You can't force them to happen instantly, but you can water them like plants with small acts of kindness. The more you put into a friendship, the more likely it is to grow strong.

How to grow friendships:

- Keep in touch – say hello, message, or invite them to join in.
- Be reliable and keep your promises.
- Include them in activities but respect their answer if they say no.
- Show kindness through small gestures, like remembering things they told you.
- Celebrate good times together, like birthdays or achievements.

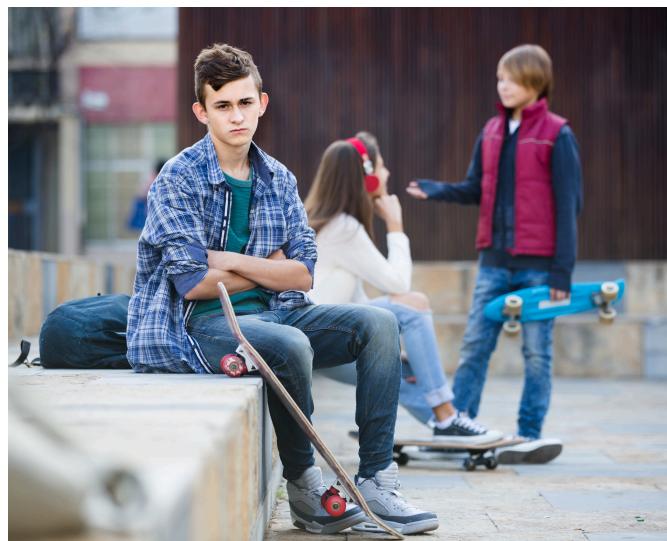


Friendship Challenges

Even the strongest friendships can have problems sometimes. Disagreements, jealousy, or misunderstandings are normal. Learning to handle these moments calmly can make your friendship even stronger.

Ways to handle challenges:

- Stay calm if you disagree.
- Use “I feel” statements to explain your feelings.
- Listen to their side and try to understand.
- Take a break if emotions feel too big.
- Say sorry when you’re wrong, and forgive when you can.
- If a friendship becomes unkind or one-sided, it’s okay to take a step back.



Friendships Your Way

Friendships can sometimes feel difficult, but they are also one of the most rewarding parts of life. You don't need to change who you are to have friends. The best friendships happen when people like you for being yourself. It's okay to have lots of friends, or just one or two – both are just as valuable. The important thing is that your friendships are positive, supportive, and bring happiness.

Final reminders:

- Be yourself – true friends will like you for who you are.
- Friendships don't have to be perfect to be real.
- Everyone finds friendships tricky sometimes.
- With practice and patience, you'll keep learning and improving.
- Remember: you are worthy of friendship and belonging.

