

Children, Friends and Connections

Do we need friends? Are we born with the skill to make friends or is it a learned skill? Human beings are programmed to respond to each other even from birth. Even babies respond to those around them by turning their heads towards another person who is communicating with them. Children need their friends, to have fun with and so much more. When children are playing together they share a love of what they are both interested in, they develop emotionally and socially, and cultivate positive self-esteem. They learn important skills such as taking turns and sharing; skills that will be life long and help develop lasting friendships. Having friends also gives children a sense of belonging.

If a child is spending an excessive amount of time in front of T.V. or any other screen, they are limiting the amount of time needed to make friends. When friendships do develop and those children share a love of T.V. or video games, make sure that they also spend time in other pursuits together. As a parent you may need to step in and help your child make friends and discover ways other than screen time to play together. Provide opportunities for children to get together. Let your child invite other children over, get together with other parents with similar aged children or visit parks where children play and let your child join in their play. Research now shows that children who do not develop friendships do not do as well academically. Children need friends to share their thoughts and feelings with. As children get older they share more with their peers than they do with their parents, making friendships all the more important because if a child has no friend to vent to or share with, what are the alternatives?

It is up to the adults in the child's life to encourage friendships and demonstrate kindness towards others. Friendships will come and go but as your children age they will develop deep friendships and their life will be all the richer for it.