



# LITTLE SNOOPERS

A Parents' Companion Guide to...

# Meaningful Friendships



# Overview

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, once said, “Man is by nature a social animal.” We all know this, in one way or another. We have all experienced both the joy of connection and the pain of rejection. In our own time, we come into the friendships that define our lives. We, hopefully, meet people who remind us of how incredible a place the world can be. Through meaningful relationships, we grow as individuals.

Yet, these skills are not always so easy to pick up. If you want to set your child up for long-term success, then you need to teach them strategies for developing meaningful relationships. You want your snooper to know that in any new environment, they will be able to navigate social opportunities and start developing relationships.

To get into the habit of guiding your child in the right direction, these are the top 5 ways you can help your child develop meaningful friendships!

# 1. Teach Them Empathy

Empathy is a simple, yet difficult, skill to teach. Each of us recognizes empathy when we see it. We know when people are treating us kindly and making an effort to understand their perspective. Likewise, people sense immediately when we are showing them the empathy that we hope they would show to us. To teach your child empathy, you can remind them how important it is to see the world through other people's eyes. If they are in the middle of a difficult situation, point out the reality that empathy will make everything more straightforward and manageable.

When you and your child come into contact with someone who is going through a difficult time, use it as an educational moment. Explain to your child that everyone goes through difficult times sooner or later. If we are living up to our highest ideals, then we are naturally showing each other empathy. We are exhibiting respect for each other and trying not to make anyone's life any more difficult than it already is. When in doubt, we ask ourselves how we would feel if someone treated us the same way.

## 2. Teach Them How to Communicate by Listening

Like empathy, listening is difficult, right up to the point that you master it and start to practice it automatically. Any time you are in a conversation with your child, you can teach them how to listen by listening yourself. When your child shares a thought or an opinion, make an effort to listen actively. Even if the conversation is not quite as engaging as one that you would have had with another adult, leave behind any preconceived notions. The point of listening is not for your own entertainment: it's to show your child how it feels to be heard.

At the same time, don't ignore any poor listening habits that your child may have acquired. If your child seems to space out while you are speaking, ask yourself why that is. Try to track down the cause of their distraction. You may need to initiate a challenging discussion with your child, explaining in detail what it means to people when we do and don't listen to them. Along the way, you should also teach skills like repeating back what someone said and nodding to signify comprehension, both of which will greatly enhance their ability to develop meaningful friendships.

# 3. Teach Them Self-Awareness

A lack of self-awareness will hold any child back from developing meaningful relationships. If your child does not learn some self-awareness, other children will start to think of them as frustrating or difficult to talk to. The best way to avoid that outcome is to teach self-awareness early on. Whenever your child seems to have done something unconsciously or semi-consciously, draw attention to it. Make sure that they know the impact their actions make on others. Whether or not they have meant to do something hurtful, explain the reality of the situation.

It is much better to go through an uncomfortable conversation about self-awareness with your child than to send them off to try to meet friends without that skill. Don't worry about offending them. Speak gently and listen attentively but say what you need to say so that they understand how others are perceiving them in the world.

# 4. Teach Them to Share Their Emotions

Many people enter their adult years clueless as to how they can share their emotions. Once they do, however, they are often able to turn their entire lives around. People start to relate to them more, they feel deeper connections with their loved ones, and they feel calmer and more at peace in their everyday environments. Instead of leaving this work for later on, you can afford your child a major advantage, teaching them the value of sharing emotions. As a bonus, your child will feel better equipped to respond to their turbulent teenage years, knowing that they can always unburden themselves by saying what is on their mind.

The best method for teaching a child to share their emotions is to share your own. When you are feeling sad, annoyed, or embarrassed, talk about it. Tell your child what your emotions are – so that you are making yourself an example of honest and forthright sharing. Your child will pick up on this behavior, sharing their instincts more naturally and instinctively. They will then be able to develop more meaningful relationships by speaking openly. Of course, your own relationship with your child will benefit as well.

# 5. Teach Them to Let go and Have Fun

The simplest strategy for developing meaningful friendships may, as odd as it sounds, turn out to be the most powerful. By teaching your child how to let go and have fun, you are teaching them that they do not need to feel any pressure about making friends. Instead, they can be themselves. They can step into any environment, facing people whom they have never met before, and assume that others are going to appreciate them and enjoy their company.

Once again, the best method here is to make yourself the example. Have fun with your child, joking and planning outings as often as you can. To prepare your child to develop meaningful friendships, you want to develop a meaningful connection with your child first. Show them what it means to be a friend – by being a friend yourself. Teach them that it's okay to make mistakes and that it's okay to feel a little goofy sometimes.

# In Conclusion

Friendships are, as most of us learn, the surest path to lasting happiness and sustainable relaxation. When life and all of its other burdens start to get us down, we can turn to our friends. Our friends are there for us, encouraging us and lifting us up. If we are fortunate, then we meet friends whose loyalty and kindness changes our lives for the better. We know that no matter what else happens, they are going to be there for us, which feels wonderful.

Teaching your child how to develop meaningful friendships, you are teaching your child how to live a better life. There is no way to overestimate the impact that you are making, directing them to do something that will help them to smile day in and day out. Someday, when they realize what their friends mean to them, they may even thank you for the effort you put into helping them make those friends in the first place.