



Read to Me News

From Your Public Library & Idaho's Read to Me Program

Let's Be Friends!

Friendships are important in helping children develop emotionally and socially. Through friendships and belonging to a group, children improve their sense of self-esteem and find a training ground for trying out different ways of relating to others.

Research shows that children with friends have a greater sense of well-being, better self-esteem and fewer social problems as adults than individuals without friends.

During the elementary school years children generally choose friends who are similar to themselves and who share their interests. At this age children become increasingly group-oriented. Children who can manage social relations within a group and think of activities that are fun tend to have an easier time during this time period.

There is a certain amount of normal social pain involved in making and keeping friends. You may feel a bit helpless and bewildered when your child's social life shifts and old friends are dropped or new ones are added. Just remember you gave your child her first lessons about friendship and empathy during the first years of her life, and you still have an important role to play as her most trusted adult.

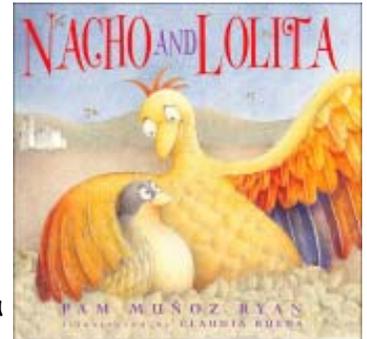
If you focus on listening to your child and being open-minded about her friendship experiences, she will continue to turn to you in times of joy and trouble. See the back page

for more ideas you can use to help your child learn to be a good friend and deal with difficult situations when they arise.



Book of the Month

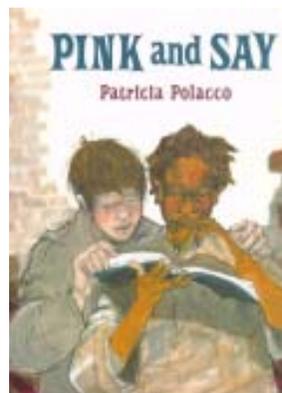
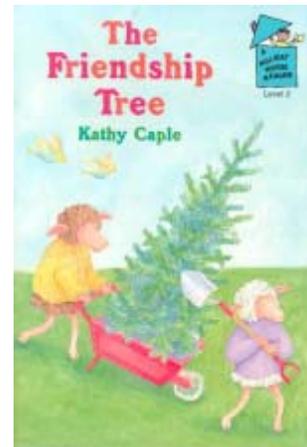
Nacho and Lolita,
by Pam Muñoz Ryan



This book puts some magical flourishes on a Mexican folktale Ryan heard from her grandmother. Nacho is a *pitacoche* bird that "carries all the colors of the world in his feathers," but he longs for a companion. Then he meets a migratory swallow named Lolita, and ooh-la-la! The book highlights the migratory patterns of the birds that call Mission San Juan Capistrano home for the spring and summer and is a great story about the power of love.

Your library has many books on friendship for children as well as some parenting books on the subject. Here's a sampling of "friendship" titles for children:

- *The Friendship Tree*, by Kathy Caple
- *Jack and Rick*, by David McPhail
- *The Rainbow Fish*, by Marcus Pfister
- *Pink and Say*, by Patricia Polacco
- *Ramona's World*, by Beverly Cleary
- *Digby and Kate*, by Barbara Baker
- *Best Friend Face-off*, by Emily Costello
- *Fox and His Friends*, by Edward Marshall
- *Biscuit Finds a Friend*, by Alyssa Satin Capucilli



What Parents Can Do to Support Friendships

Provide subtle encouragement. Find practical ways you can help your child make room in his/her life for being with other children. This is especially important if your child is shy or reluctant about peer interactions. For example, be flexible about family schedules so that your child can find time to be with friends. Offer your home or offer to accompany children on outings. You might also make arrangements for your family to spend time with another family that has a similar-age child. Or, you could make concrete suggestions, such as "You can invite somebody to go to the library with us on Saturday."

Model appropriate social behavior. Children learn a great deal from their parents. Teach empathy. Talk to your child about your friends.

Know your child's friends. As children grow older, parents have less opportunity to control their youngster's peer networks; nevertheless parents should remain involved and interested in their social life. They should be knowledgeable about their child's friends, get to know them, ask questions about social activities and stay informed.

Worry less. Most kids figure out friendship and group life pretty well. Most will get over the inevitable upsets, rejections, and betrayals without terrible scars. It's all part of the learning process. Be available to listen to your child when he wants to talk about his social life. Acknowledge the difficulties. Don't overreact and don't try to solve every problem.



Fun with Friendship

Friendship Necklaces

Using items you can find around the house, string together friendship necklaces.

Example: macaroni, buttons, construction paper, beads, empty thread spools etc.

OR Make edible necklaces using cereal, marshmallows, candy, dried fruit etc.

Homemade Bead Clay

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cornstarch

Warm water

Mix flour, salt and cornstarch in bowl. Add warm water slowly until dough starts to clump together. Knead into a large ball. Dries very hard in 48 hours. Keeps at least four weeks refrigerated. To make beads, roll small balls of dough and pierce with a toothpick. Paint and string dry beads to make necklaces.

Things to Talk About

Talk about ways your child could be a good friend. Talk about things that hurt friendships like teasing, bullying, gossiping, and excluding children from play.



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