

TIPS FOR PARENTS:

WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS DIFFICULTY WITH *PEER RELATIONS*

Look for Warning Signs

At School

- Rachel has no friends at school; she seems sad all the time.
- Charlie is getting teased and threatened. He doesn't want to go to school.
- Allie doesn't get invited to parties like the other kids do.

At Home

- Harry seems addicted to video games; he never goes outside to play with his friends.
- Jared is very secretive; he's hanging out with weird looking, older kids.
- Sue is spreading really mean rumors about other kids.
- Sam is really worried about being too shy.

Provide Support

General Goals

- Be aware of kids' typical, "normal" social problems.
- Help your child develop resilience (against peer pressure, peer rejection, peer conflict)
- Support your child's strengths, sense of autonomy, and social competence

Specific Actions

- Help your child make and keep "quality" friends
- Model and practice effective communication at home (for example, between parents)
- Know when to back off and when to step in if your child is having a problem
- Have a clear policy for monitoring your child's communication with peers (e.g., on the computer)

Discuss with Your Child

Positive and Negative Aspects of Peer Relationships

- Social, emotional, and academic support with friends
- Risky and dangerous situations (such as peer pressure, gossip, social ostracism)

Coping Strategies

- Share; negotiate; discuss
- Distance oneself from kids known to be overly-aggressive
- Prior to acting, stop to reflect and formulate a plan of what to do
- Be assertive (Note: *assertiveness* is different from *aggressiveness*); don't overreact!
- Seek help from a teacher, parent, or friend

When Necessary, Get Professional Help

- From your child's pediatrician
- From a psychologist