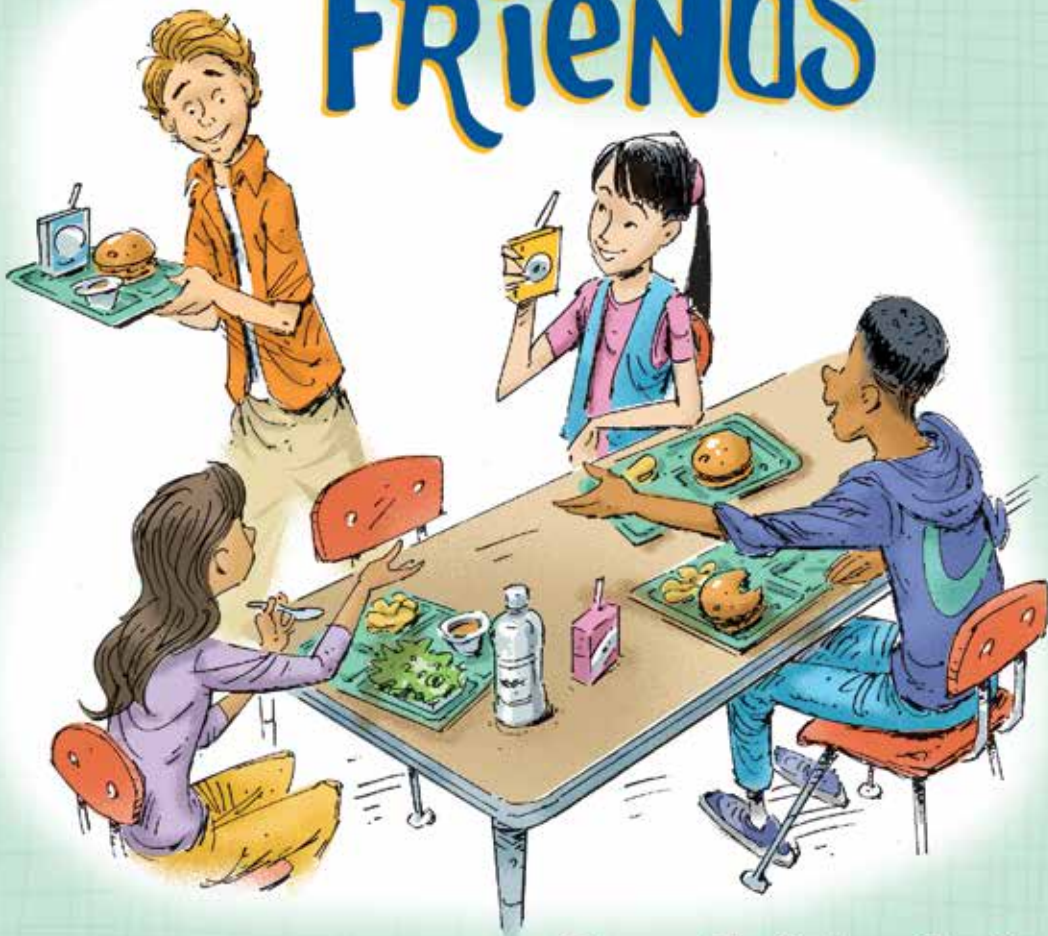


THE SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR

# Making and Being FRIENDS



James J. CRIST, Ph.D.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this book to all the kids and teens I have worked with over the past 20 years who have struggled with making and keeping friends. You were my inspiration for everything in its pages. Having friends is one of the greatest joys in life, and I hope that I am able to help even more kids by writing this book.

## Acknowledgments

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# A FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION

What are a few of your favorite things to do? Do you love to ride your bike? Surf the Internet? Do puzzles? Play games with character dolls or action figures? Do you get excited about hiking, swimming, or singing? Maybe you like to watch funny movies, chomp on popcorn, and laugh until you cry.

Whatever you love to do, chances are it's a lot more fun to do with a friend.

Think about it. Board games, video games, school, sports, music, handstands, summer camp, cooking, hide and seek, burp jokes, long car rides, short subway rides, TV shows, YouTube videos, chores, and eating pizza. All these activities are probably going to be more satisfying if you share them with a friend.

And it's not just about fun. Friends can support you when you feel down. They can remind you what you're good at and help you get better at other things. Friends help each other, stick up for each other, and listen to each other. Friends play together, talk together, and just hang out and do nothing together. Sure, sometimes friends fight—but then they make up, and their friendship has a chance to be stronger than ever.

Some kids find it natural to socialize and build relationships. Other kids are shy at first, but do okay once they get to know someone. And some kids are uncomfortable in social situations, or they just haven't learned the best ways to start friendships and keep them going. They struggle to make friends.

How about you? Does making, keeping, and being friends come easily to you? Answer the following questions to get an idea.

## A Friendly Quiz

For each question, give yourself 1 point for “definitely,” 2 for “sometimes,” or 3 for “hardly ever.” Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

**1 = Definitely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Hardly Ever**

- 1** It's easy for me to walk up to someone I don't know and start talking.
- 2** I think I'm pretty good at making friends.
- 3** I usually keep friends for a long time.
- 4** I'm good at apologizing when I accidentally hurt a friend's feelings.
- 5** I know how to handle problems with friends when they happen.
- 6** Lots of people seem to want to be my friend.
- 7** I have a “best friend” and we get along great.
- 8** I get invited to friends' homes and invite them to mine.
- 9** I am a good sport when I play games with my friends.
- 10** I can stick up for a friend if he or she is in trouble.

Add up your scores. If you got between 10 and 15 points, congratulations! You're a confident friend-maker with strong friendship skills. Keep reading to learn how to improve your skills even more—and how to take them to the next level.

If you got 16 or more points, don't worry. You can use some improvement in your friendship skills, but so can most people. And notice that I am calling them friendship *skills*. That's because making friends, developing strong friendships, and being a good friend are just like snowboarding, swimming, biking, writing, playing video games, dancing, and being a good student. They are all skills that you can practice and get better at. It's true that some people have a natural talent for socializing. Some people seem to attract friends the way your Halloween candy attracts grabby parents. (Why don't they just buy their own?)

But even people who have an easy time with friendship have to practice. And *everyone* can improve.

As a psychologist, I work with lots of kids and help them figure out ways of living happier and healthier lives. For many of them, that means improving their social skills. That's why I wrote this book. I want to help *you* be happier and healthier. I know how important friendship is, and I know how hard it can be sometimes. The skills you'll learn in this book are some of the same ones I teach the kids I see in my work.

There's another reason I wrote this book. I was a shy kid. I missed some great chances to make friends because I didn't have the nerve—or the skills—to join other kids in their fun. What if they didn't like me? Or laughed at me? What if we didn't get along? I also didn't know how to work out problems with friends. But as I grew older, I learned. And I realized I didn't want to miss out anymore, so I developed my friendship skills and practiced. Now I have lots of friends, even though I can still be shy when meeting new people.

Maybe you wish you had more friends, and you need help getting to know people. Or maybe you're happy with the number of friends you have, but you need advice for getting along and solving arguments. Or maybe you're not sure: You feel pretty good about your friendships, but sometimes you feel left out, lonely, or confused.

This book can help you with all of those situations and more. You can learn how to meet kids, make friends, become better friends, settle arguments, and understand each other. You can learn how to act when you get together, the importance of being a good sport, and how you can make your friendships last for years—if that's what you want. And you'll learn how to end friendships when they don't work out and it becomes time to say good-bye. (It's sad, but once in a while "breaking up" is the best thing for everyone.)


The last chapter is all about being a "super" friend—someone who makes friends from different social groups, brings different friends together, stands up against bullying, and helps other kids feel good about themselves. That kind of friend is a leader, and anybody can be one.

Feel free to dip into any chapter where you might need some extra help right now. For example, if you're having an argument with a friend that you just can't seem to solve, skip ahead to Chapter 7, "How to Handle Fights, Hurt Feelings, and Other Friendship Troubles." For the best understanding of all things friendship, start with Chapter 1 and read all the way through.

Every chapter opens with a "What would you do?" story about kids having some kind of struggle with friendship. But these stories don't have endings. Instead, they end with a question for you: What would *you* do? After you read the chapter, you'll have the chance to revisit the story and make your own ending.

To help you learn all the skills and tips in every chapter, you'll also find a few other features:

\* **Friendship Phrases.**

Plenty of helpful examples of how to use the skills you're learning will be marked with this talk balloon: 

\* **Try This!** Sort of like homework assignments, these are little things you can do to practice what you learn.

\* **Quotes from Real Kids.** These are words of advice and friendship stories from kids I've worked with.

\* **Quick Quizzes.** At the end of every chapter, take a short quiz to see what you learned.

I'd like to know how my book helps you. I'd love to hear about your challenges and successes with friends. You can email me at [help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com) or send me a letter at:

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★ **He and She**

All of the information in this book is meant for both boys and girls. When giving examples or explaining an idea, I change the pronoun I use from section to section—starting with “she,” then “he,” then “she” again, and so on. No matter which pronoun I use in a particular example, remember that it is meant for you.

## Chapter 1

# What's The Big Deal ABOUT FRIENDS?



**D**evon, age 10, goes outside for recess at school. He brings his game cards and plays with them alone. He thinks the kids at his school are all bullies. He thinks, “I’m fine. I don’t need friends.” He figures it won’t work out anyway, so why even try? But after a while, he looks over and sees the other kids playing tag and laughing and joking. He tries to tell himself he doesn’t care, but inside, he does. It’s hard to play alone all the time. . . .



### What would you do?

Devon seems pretty unhappy. What would you do if you were in his shoes? You'll find some ideas in this chapter, and at the end of the chapter you'll have a chance to revisit Devon's story and make up an ending for it.

Human beings are “social creatures.” That means we have a built-in need to be social—to get to know each other and build relationships. Since the first humans walked the earth, we have lived in communities. We take care of each other. We keep each other company. We love each other.

From the moment we're born, it's in our nature to be happier when we're together, at least some of the time. We get some of that companionship from our families. But we also make important connections with others—our friends.

## What Is a Friend?

We all have different things we look for in a friend. Here are a few things that many people value. You can probably think of other ideas to add to the list.

A friend is someone you can do things with:

- \* play
- \* hang out
- \* explore
- \* tell stories
- \* share important news
- \* laugh
- \* cry
- \* learn new things together

A friend is also someone you can:

- \* learn new things *from*
- \* count on when you have a problem
- \* support when she has a problem

Friends are not only fun, helpful, and reliable. They're also good for you! People who have friends are more likely to:

- \* be happier
- \* be healthier
- \* do better in school
- \* live longer
- \* be more successful at their jobs when they grow up

Yup—live longer! Hard to believe? Maybe so, but it's true.

## What Else Is Good About Friends?

Lots of things.

Friendships help you learn to deal with your feelings. When you have friends, it's normal to disagree, argue, have your feelings hurt, and apologize when you've messed up. Friends also have to learn to share, take turns, work together, and compromise. As you learn how to do these things successfully, you're growing up. You're learning how to get along in the world. Learning to get along now will help you be happier in the future.

When you make friends and manage relationships, you compare yourself to others. You see what others think of you, and you learn a lot about yourself that way. Maybe you don't think you're very smart, but a friend thinks it's cool how you can take things apart and fix them. You may start to see yourself as smart. Or maybe you joke around a lot when you're supposed to be listening or working. Your friends like your sense of humor, but they ask you to be quiet when it's time to focus. You're learning how to act in different situations.



## FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD

How do you say "friend" in other languages? Just say the word to someone who speaks a different language, and they'll know you're interested in talking to them.

	Say it like
Spanish: <i>amigo</i> (boy) or <i>amiga</i> (girl)	uh-ME-go, uh-ME-guh
French: <i>ami</i>	ah-ME
German: <i>freund</i>	FROYND
Italian: <i>amico</i> (boy) or <i>amica</i> (girl)	ah-ME-co, ah-ME-cuh
Arabic: <i>sadiqi</i> (boy) or <i>sadiqati</i> (girl)	sah-dee-KEY, sah-dee-KA-tee
Russian: <i>drug</i> (boy), <i>podruga</i> (girl)	DROOG, pah-DROO-guh
Chinese: <i>péngyou</i>	pung-YO
Japanese: <i>tomodachi</i>	tow-moh-da-chee
Indian (Hindi): <i>dost</i>	DOST



Learning how to get along with people can help you in other ways. For example, you may do well in your schoolwork, but if you can't get along with your teachers, it will make going to school a lot harder for you. If you lose your cool and yell, forgetting that you are hurting people's feelings, you might even get into serious trouble.

When you grow up, friends are still important. You'll want to have friends who can help you when you need it, give you rides to places, go with you to the movies, celebrate your birthday, shoot baskets with you, or even just talk. And speaking of when you grow up, getting along with others is also important when you have a job.

## What Does It Take to Make and Be Friends?

You already know that people are social creatures. It makes sense, then, that making and being friends require “social skills.” These are the different abilities and techniques we all use to get along.

Just like playing an instrument, throwing a ball, or being a good student, social skills are learnable. And just like those other skills, you can't expect to have super social skills overnight. You have to practice. The more you practice, the better you'll get.

Friendship also requires the ability to look closely at yourself. If you have trouble with friendships, ask yourself why. This can be hard. It takes courage, but it's worth it, and you can do it. Be honest with yourself. Maybe you are shy or don't have strong social skills yet. Or maybe you sometimes act in ways that make it harder for others to like you. Some kids might be rude, bossy, or mean. They might not show good sportsmanship, or they might have trouble sharing or taking turns. Some kids are too rough with other kids. Is that ever you?

If you aren't sure what the problem is, ask someone you trust. This might be a parent, teacher, counselor, or friend. Be open to what the person tells you. It might hurt your feelings to hear it, but it's an important first step. How else are you going to get better at making friends? You have to know what to work on.

**“It can be good to have a circle of friends, but if it gets too big, you can feel excluded. I think a group of four or five friends is best.” —Girl, age 12**

You may also want to think about what kind of friendships you want. Some kids like to have a lot of friends. They are very social and hang out with all kinds of different people. Other

kids prefer to have only a few close friends. Some kids have a best friend, others don't. Some kids hate to be alone, so they spend all their free time with other kids. Some people need "alone time" to recharge, and they hang out with friends less often. All these preferences are fine. Think about what *yours* is.



### What would you do?

Remember Devon (page 6), who is afraid to join in with the other kids at school? He tells himself that he doesn't need friends. He tells himself that he's fine without them.

In this chapter, you learned a lot of reasons why friends are important. You learned that friends can help us in many ways, and friendship is an important way of growing up. And you learned that not everyone is naturally good at making friends—but everyone can get better.

So what would you do if you were Devon?

You probably guessed that Devon would be happier if he found the courage to talk to some other kids. Make up some things he could say that would help him do that.



## Quick Quiz

Take this short quiz to see how much you learned by reading this chapter. If you like, write your answers on a sheet of paper.

### True or False?

**1** You can learn more about yourself by making friends.

**2** People who have friends tend to live longer.

**3** Even kids who have trouble making friends can get better at it.

**4** Asking others if you act in ways that make it harder to form friendships can be helpful.

**5** True "social skills" can only be gained by playing the online video game "Social Skillz Crush."

### Let's see how you did.

The answer to the first four questions is **True**. The answer to question 5 is "Of course not!"