

# ASD Family Help

Registered Charity No. 1135718

## 5 Top Tips

### Developing Friendship Skills



Making friends can be a difficult for all children, however our autistic young people can struggle more than most. Many autistic people would really like to form genuine friendships but struggle to do so because of the difficulty of understanding social cues and non-verbal communication as well as issues associated with social anxiety. Others may not be interested in forming social relationships and this is not something to be concerned about. Here are our 5 top tips to support our young people to understand and form good relationships.

- 1 What is a Friend?** – This can be a hard concept to comprehend. Explain what makes a good friend and how you can have fun with a friend. A friend is someone you enjoy being with, they often like the same things as you, they work together by sharing and taking turns and will keep in contact with each other. Friends accept who you are and are there to help you when things get hard. Remember your friends will have other friends as well and may not always spend all their time with you and that is ok.
- 2 Making and Meeting New Friends** - Think of ways you can meet new friends, there are several groups in and around the area. Draw out and discuss what activities you can do together. Invite a friend over to play, structure and plan out the activities by creating a choice board. Using your special interests can sometimes be a great way of meeting people.
- 3 Teach them on how to start a conversation** – Practice greeting people, what can you say, what can you ask? Learn to stand an arm's length away and where you feel comfortable when looking at others. Conversations normally start with a "Hello" "Hello, how are you?" or "excuse me" this helps gain the other persons attention. Make a list of ideas on what you may like to ask/say next.
- 4 Social Media** - Teach them the rules around mobile phones and social media. Explain that sometimes someone may not answer your call/text straight away. Beware of their safety online, what are they on/using and are they aware what they can/cannot share. Explain what they should look out for and what they should do if they feel they are being bullied or not safe. However, remember it can be a great way for them to communicate to others and make friends. Please just monitor their devices regularly.
- 5 Upsetting a Friend** – If you make a mistake or upset somebody it is usually a good idea to apologise for hurting their feelings. You can also ask them what you did wrong and explain to them that you did not mean to upset them. Use comic strip conversations to help explain, the others person's feelings and point of view and how they can approach this situation.

There is no reason why you can't make friends and enjoy spending time with them. The key to good friendships is that you understand that you do not need to change who you are. Good friends will accept who you are and the way you may see/do things differently. However, many people – neurodivergents and neurotypicals alike - are simply not interested in these social relationships and you should not feel forced into them if you do not want to. [Making friends \(autism.org.uk\)](http://autism.org.uk) The NAS have lots more ideas on their website.

**Please call our Help Line if you would like to talk things through.** 07384 733658 or email

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