

Eyes on



Peer relations

Sowing the seeds of friendship



PARENTS



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Early Childhood Development



“Learning how to make and keep friends is one of the most important challenges of childhood.”

What do we know?

- Learning how to make and keep friends is one of the most important challenges of childhood.
- Young children who learn to cooperate and play well with one another tend to make friends more easily throughout their lives.
- Young children who are able to make friends will develop skills to adjust to different situations in the future.
- Friendships provide children valuable learning experiences. When children interact and play with others, they learn the importance of social life and how to control their emotions. This will help them to live in harmony with others, during childhood and later in life.
- Children’s social skills make a big difference in whether they are accepted by others or not.
- The social skills that help children to be accepted by others are:
 - Communication: to say what they want and feel, ask questions, invite other children to play.
 - Ability to control emotions: to recognize their own emotions and those of others, to control emotional outbursts, and to deal with frustrations.
 - Ability to resolve conflicts: to control the impulse to be aggressive, to be able to suggest alternative solutions, and to compromise.
 - Cooperation: to take turns, imitate others, react positively to others, and to see other’s point of view.
- Relationships between brothers and sisters play an important part in children’s social development. Children with siblings have many opportunities to practice social skills in an intimate and safe environment.
- Relationships with siblings tend to be emotionally charged. Spending time with their siblings helps children learn to deal with strong emotions (positive and negative). They also learn to understand what others think, want and feel. This helps children learn how to resolve conflicts.

Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... offering children opportunities to learn to solve problems on their own. Sometimes parents intervene too quickly to solve conflicts between children.

- Try not to intervene in children's conflicts too quickly. If you do intervene, pay equal attention to each of the children involved.
- Be a mediator.
- Suggest possible solutions. Then, let the children decide on the solution that works best for them.

... the fact that even at the young age of 3-4 years, some children already have problems being accepted by others.

- Help children develop social skills.
- Be a good role model.
- Give them lots of opportunities to spend time with other children so they can practice these skills.

... children who are aggressive or timid since they are more likely to be rejected by their peers.

- Praise children for positive social behaviour.





Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of child peer relations, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

This information sheet is published by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, one of four Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being. Funding for the Centres of Excellence is provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors/researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

We are grateful to the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research for their financial contributions to produce this information sheet.

Coordinator:

Lucie Beaupré

Collaborators:

Mara Brendgen and
Isabelle Vinet (CPEQ)

Copy editor:

Lana Crossman

Translator:

Donna Riley

Graphic design:

DesJardins Conception Graphique inc.

Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

GRIP-Université de Montréal

P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-ville

Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7

Telephone: 514.343.6111, extension 2576

Fax: 514.343.6962

E-mail: cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca

Website: www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

