

PARENT INFORMATION 1

Friends & The Friendliness SPICE

Most children will say that one of the best parts about going to school is being with their friends. In *Connecting 4 Friendships; Playground Resilience & Wisdom*, the children will be learning skills about making and keeping friends, joining in games and responding to some of the difficulties that can occur along the way.

'Friendliness' is a set of behaviours that are easily recognized and can be acquired by anyone - with some motivation and practise.

If you ask a child what 'being friendly' means, generally they say someone who:

- Is nice.
- Is kind.
- Helps when you hurt yourself.
- Shares their lunch with you.
- Doesn't say nasty things to you or about you.

Whilst a friendly child may show this behaviour, they don't accurately capture the many different characteristics and behaviour of someone who is 'outgoing' and 'relationship-seeking' - or in other words - 'friendly.' Those that children rarely mention are:

- Taking the initiative to approach someone.
- A genuine interest in getting to know others.
- Making appreciative comments about the other person to them.
- Showing 'warm' body language such as a quick greeting, physical touch or a smile.
- Making someone else the focus of your attention - rather than oneself.

Your child has been introduced to The Friendliness SPICE – a handy and memorable acronym for a 'Friendliness Package.' Displaying The Friendliness SPICE below would be a good focus for a discussion with your child about they demonstrate friendliness.

S mile & say "Hello!"

P raise

I nvite

C hat

E njoy

"You're great at netball."

"Way to go on that test!"

"Should we sit together?"

"That looks fun. Can I play?"

"I've also read that book!"

"Where did you go on the holidays?"



BODY LANGUAGE COUNTS!

Eye contact, chin up, shoulders back.

Nod your head and smile; listen and try not to interrupt.

Out of the five SPICE behaviours, children regularly comment that 'Praise' is the one that they are least comfortable - or don't think about - doing. The emphasis has been on praising personal qualities, actions and achievements, rather than appearances. Continuing this practice at home or a reminder about noticing someone else's efforts at school, would help the behavior to become more familiar.

A comparison has also been drawn between 'friendly' and 'unfriendly' behaviours, both of which your child will be able to give you some examples. Your 'out aloud' comments of observed friendly and unfriendly behaviour, by anyone, will help to keep the conversation alive.

A child who is described as being 'shy' may also appear to be unfriendly, as the reluctance to make contact or connect with someone can appear intentional. Shyness is related to anxiety and is more often shown in new or unfamiliar social situations. Although the extent and frequency of shyness often decreases with maturity and the ability to manage emotions, it can also become a habitual, learned response which can be restrictive and limit many opportunities for learning and development.

The good news, however, is that shyness can be reduced by learning and practising social and emotional skills. Both this Module and also Module 4 provide an excellent package of skills to assist a child showing shyness. However, if the shyness involves frequent avoidance of, or distress at, engaging in new activities or social situations, a discussion with your General Practitioner is also recommended.

A note about safety. Please be aware that in this Module it is **NOT** suggested or implied that any stranger anywhere is worth befriending. Encouraging friendliness and approaching others is highlighted as being relevant to one's class mates, and peers in general. Reference to safe and appropriate personal boundaries is referenced in our discussions.

REFLECTION POINT:

Adults often comment that their ability to make friends has changed with maturity. Is this true for yourself? If so, what factors do you think have contributed?