FRIENDSHIP MATTERS SERIES

Ways to Support and Foster Student Connections in School

Helping every student find their people

For educators & school staff



Students with friends tend to be happier, more engaged and less likely to drop out. You see who connects, who struggles and who's left out, so you're well placed to help.

Six classroom strategies

1 Icebreakers

Pair students who don't know each other to ask questions, then share what they learned.

2 Buddy bench

A spot for students seeking a playmate. Encourage invites; step in if a child waits.

3 Mix it up

Discussions, end-of-day games and seat changes help students meet more peers.

4 Intentional groups

Assign small groups rather than self-selecting, to gently break up cliques.

5 Normalize conflict

Teach compromise and common ground; use scenarios with older students.

6 Act on exclusion

Address teasing and exclusion right away, and watch for bullying.

When to loop in support

- Threats, harassment, repeated humiliation or pressure to do something unsafe
- Ongoing distress, withdrawal, avoiding school, or sudden changes in mood or behavior
- Connect with your counselor or mental health team, and loop in families.

In a crisis: Call or text the **988** Lifeline. Emergency: **911**.

Sources

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Hessel, E. T. (Reviewer). (2023, June). *Helping kids cope with cliques*. Nemours KidsHealth. https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/cliques.html

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