

A Leader's Guide to



Little
Laugh
& Learn™

Make a Friend, Be a Friend



free spirit
PUBLISHING®

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Illustrated by Steve Mark

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A Note to Teachers and Caregivers

For some kids, making friends is as natural as the blowing wind. Their peers just seem drawn to them. At the same time, many kids need some extra support with this important life skill. Some children may feel shy, uncomfortable, unsure of themselves, or uncertain about what to say. And making friends is only the beginning. Maintaining a friendship means finding ways through turbulent times as well as good ones.

Every young child can benefit from help with social skills, whether friendship is a breeze for them or something tougher. And while social skills is a broad topic that includes having conversations, listening, sharing, taking turns, working out conflicts, being a good sport, and more, *Make a Friend, Be a Friend* seeks to make the art of friendship accessible by putting the focus on one critical “secret ingredient”: empathy.

Simply put, empathy means understanding and being aware of another person’s feelings, thoughts, and experience. It means actively putting yourself in their shoes.

When children keep empathy front of mind, many other skills can click into place. For example, many people are most comfortable and engaged when talking about themselves. So, when having a conversation with a friend, or potential friend, empathy helps remind a child to ask the other person questions about themselves.

When discussing particular social skills or working through activities with children, it can be helpful to prompt them to center on empathy. “What might Keri be thinking right now?” “How do you think Hakim feels about that?”

This leader’s guide provides discussion questions and activities to support each chapter in the book. You can hold discussions as a large group, such as a classroom, as well as in small groups or one-on-one with a single child.

You can adapt the activities to fit your group size. For example, break large groups into smaller groups for activities, then have groups share their results with the full group. When working with one or two children, you may want to act as their partner.

During discussions, handle stories about problems between and among friends sensitively. Be clear that children should not name names of anyone who did something mean or unkind. Let them know that they do not have to share personal stories.

Some children are shy and may be less eager to interact. A little gentle encouragement may be enough to get them to participate, but do not pressure them or put them on the spot. Be sure to create a safe space for discussion. Don’t ridicule mistakes or wrong answers, and spread praise evenly among children. Small-group discussions will likely feel less intimidating than large-group ones for shyer kids, and they provide more opportunities to participate, so it can be a good idea to break down larger groups when possible.



CHAPTER 1

Fantastic Facts About Friends

Discussion Questions

- What do you like to do with friends?
- The book says “Friends make good times better. They make bad times better too.” Can you think of some examples when a friend might make a good time or a bad time better?
- What is something you have learned from a friend? What is something a friend has learned from you?
- Would you rather have lots of friends or a few close friends? Or somewhere in between? Why?

Activities

1. Friendship Fun

Have children write or draw a picture about a time they did something fun with a friend. It could be a big thing, like taking a trip together, or a small thing, like sharing a joke. What made it fun?

2. Friendship Stories

Start by reading a few picture books about friendship, such as *Be a Friend* by Salina Yoon, *Ash Dresses Her Friends* by Fu Wewnzhen, *Can I Play Too?* by Mo Willems, and *A Letter to Amy* by Ezra Jack Keats. (You probably have other ideas to add, or you can simply do a search for “early elementary picture books about friends” or something similar.)

Talk about the stories. Who are the characters? What happens in the beginning? What is the main idea or problem? How do the characters get along? How do they fix a problem? Ask children if they would like to be friends with the characters. Why or why not?



CHAPTER 2

Hi There! How to Find and Make Friends

Discussion Questions

- What activities do you like? Have you met friends doing these activities?
- Name as many greetings as you can think of.
- What are some compliments you can give to someone?
- Pretend you're the person in the "What Would You Do?" story. Which of the three kids would you talk to? How would you start the conversation?

Activities

1. Things We Have in Common

Put kids in groups of two or more, preferably not with children they are already close with. Tell them to have a group discussion to find things they have in common. You can give them a goal, such as to find at least five things, or just see how many they can come up with. If you like, you can provide topics to get them started, such as favorite animals, games, toys, movies, stories, foods, sports, and so on.

This activity is nice for the beginning of the school year because it helps kids get to know each other, but it also helps them see how much they have in common even if they're from different social, cultural, ethnic, or other groups.

2. "What Would You Do?" Role Plays

Choose volunteers to role play the "What Would You Do?" story (pages 16–19) several ways, with different children for each role play. What different ways does the "you" character start the conversation? What do the characters say as the conversations continue? Role play as many different conversations as time permits.

3. Two-Way Interviews

Pair students up and have them interview each other. You can provide questions such as "Who is in your family?" and "What are your favorite things to do?" Then have pairs introduce each other to the larger group (or to you).



CHAPTER 3

Four Ways to Show You Want to Be a Friend

Discussion Questions

- What is something kind you can do for someone else today?
- Tell about a time someone shared something with you. How about a time you shared with someone else? How did it feel?
- There are a lot of different ways to be a good sport. What are some examples?
- Pretend you're having a conversation with someone. What are some questions you could ask to get the other person talking about themselves?

Activities

1. Board Game Sportsmanship

To practice taking turns and being a good sport, have kids play board games together. Make the topics of being a good winner and good loser (and sore loser and poor winner) a focus of the game by taking breaks to talk about actions that would show good or bad sportsmanship. Depending on the age and maturity of your learners and the size of your group, you may want to join them in a game the first time around and guide these discussions. "I just landed on a chute and went down two levels! What if I got really mad and quit the game? How would that feel to the rest of the players? What would be a better way for me to react so we'll all have more fun?" After they've had a chance to play with you, let them keep practicing on their own.

Remind kids that it's okay to feel disappointed when they lose or happy when they win, but having fun is the point. No one can win every time, and everybody loses sometimes. When the games are done, ask students: "What is something kind that the winner of the game can say to the other players?" "If you lost the game, what is something kind you can say to the winner?"



2. We Make the Rules

To help kids think deeper about playing by the rules, have them make up their own board game with their own rules. Provide supplies such as construction paper, markers, dice, and coins or other tokens to use for game pieces. Instruct them to make up rules for how the pieces move around the board and to make up actions for spaces on the board. Offer ideas and guidance as needed. For example: If you land on a certain square, move your piece ahead two spots. Learners can even get a little creative: If you land here, stand up and spin on one foot while saying “abracadabra.” Another option is to include “community chest” style cards: kids can write fun rules on the cards for players to draw.

3. Let’s Chat

Revisit starting and having conversations, focusing on the three talking tips:

- Ask questions about the other person.
- Take turns.
- Listen to what someone says.

Group children in pairs and offer or brainstorm together some topics to ask about, such as favorite sports, books, or superheroes; games they like to play; shows they like to watch; or people in their family. Allow time so each of the partners has a chance to start a conversation.

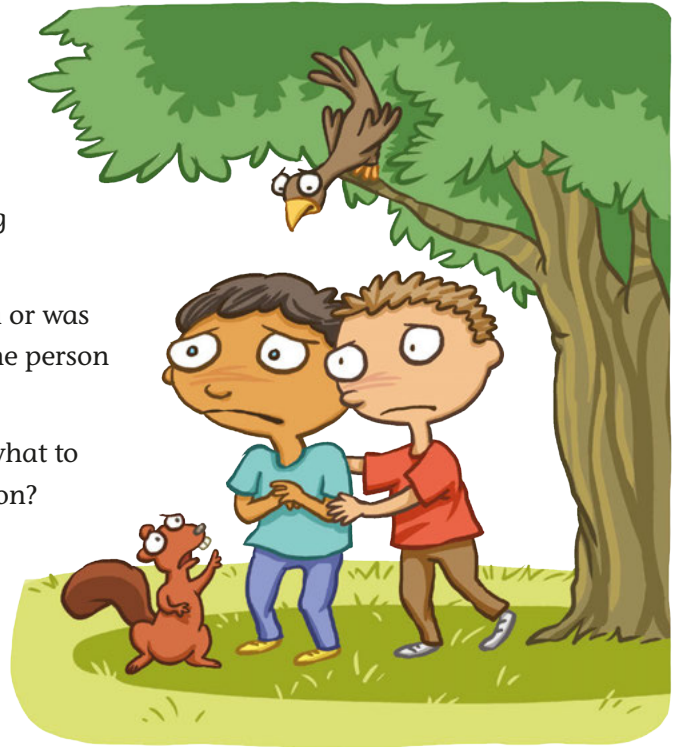


CHAPTER 4

Three Ways to Be a Good Friend (With a Secret Ingredient!)

Discussion Questions

- What does empathy mean? What are some examples of showing empathy?
- When you're talking with someone, what are some ways you can show that you are listening and interested?
- Think about a time when someone helped you or was your ally. Why did you need help? What did the person do to support you? How did it feel?
- Have you ever disagreed with a friend about what to play, watch, or do? How did you fix the situation?
- Have you ever discovered a new show, game, or activity because a friend introduced it to you? What was it? How did you like it?



Activities

1. Reading Faces for Feelings

Talking with someone is a two-way activity—one person talks and the other listens. But both people use more than their mouth or ears. A person's face tells a lot about what the person is feeling, so a listener needs to watch and see what someone's face says. To practice this two-way communication, have kids work in pairs or small groups and take turns showing different feelings with their facial expressions. Make flashcards for a range of feelings, such as *sad*, *happy*, *surprised*, *worried*, *nervous*, *excited*, *confused*, and so on. One learner chooses a random card and, without showing others the card, makes a face that expresses that emotion. The others guess what it is. Then pass the cards to the next child and repeat.

2. Helping Role Plays

How can you help someone? Put kids in small groups and have them create and perform a short role play about supporting one another. You can provide prompts, such as “one friend's pet dog died” and “someone is teased about their clothes.” Have or help groups

assign roles for each group member, such as the one who teases, the one who is teased, and the friend who is supportive. They can make up dialogue and perform the scene for the larger group or for you. If they do a teasing scene, guide them to keep the pretend teasing fictional and gentle.



CHAPTER 5

When Times Get Tough

Discussion Questions

- Think about a time you had a conflict with a friend. What happened? How did it end up? Would you do anything differently if you could do it over?
- How does it feel when a conflict is settled in a way that isn't fair?
- Why do you think people sometimes find it hard to apologize?
- Can conflicts or arguments ever be a good thing? Can they be helpful? Why or why not?
- Pretend you're the person in the "What Would You Do?" story. What can you say to your friend to make up?

Activities

1. Calming Strategies

Have kids practice calming strategies. When we get angry or upset, we often feel tense and anxious. These strategies can be used as a way to stay cool when kids are in conflict with a friend. It's best to practice these when kids are calm, not when they're in the heat of a conflict. Children can be comfortably seated or lying down as they practice. Demonstrate the breathing and movements as you first introduce them.

- **Belly breathing.** Say: *Start by breathing normally. Be mindful of how your body feels as you breathe in and out. Next, relax your muscles, put your hand on your belly, and breathe in through your nose until you feel your whole chest and belly fill with air. Hold the breath in for four seconds . . . then slowly breathe out until the breath is all gone.* Have children repeat several times, until the body feels relaxed.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** Say: *Working from the top of your body down, you will tense a group of muscles, hold for 5–10 seconds, then relax, breathe in deeply, and breathe out. Start with your face. Tighten it up, holding those tense muscles . . . and release. Relax and breathe in, then out.* Next, move to the shoulders—have students lift them, tighten them, and hold for 5–10 seconds, then relax and breathe. Move on to arms, hands, stomach, legs, and toes.



2. “What Would You Do?” Role Plays

Choose volunteers to role play the “What Would You Do?” story on pages 66–69. What does the “you” character do or say to start fixing things with her friend? What do the characters say to each other? Role play as many different conversations as time permits.

3. Conflict-Solving Stories

Have kids write a short story or draw a picture (or series of pictures) depicting two children in a conflict. Explain that they are to describe the problem and show how the characters solve it. Invite children to share their story with the group. Be sure to encourage writers to describe the feelings of both characters in their story (empathy!). For kids who drew pictures instead of writing, you can ask them about each character’s feelings. How do those feelings change when the story ends?

As an alternative to writing or drawing their stories, kids could make puppets and put on a puppet show.



CHAPTER 6

Friends Make Life Better

Discussion Questions

- What makes a good friend?
- What do you like to do with your friend or friends?
- Why is empathy such an important ingredient in friendship?
- What is something you have learned that can help you make and be friends? How can it help?
- What new ideas for making and being a good friend have you already tried? What ideas are you excited to try?



Activities

1. Scavenger Hunt

Design a scavenger hunt in which kids must learn facts about one another in order to check items off their list. For instance, the list might have, “A person who was born in another state or another country,” “A person who doesn’t like dessert,” or “A person whose favorite sport is kickball.” Make it so the items can’t be figured out without talking to others (so nothing like “A person with red hair,” for instance). Give kids time to mill around, asking one another questions and filling in their sheets. Maybe they’ll learn something surprising about a peer that they have in common!

2. Friendly Fairy Tales

Have kids pick a fairy tale with conflict in it (this should not be hard, since they’re all loaded with conflict!). Talk about what the conflict is in the story, then rewrite the ending so that the characters become friends. For example, in “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” maybe Goldilocks gets caught by the bears and apologizes. They forgive her and invite her to join them for tea.

3. Friendship Bulletin Board

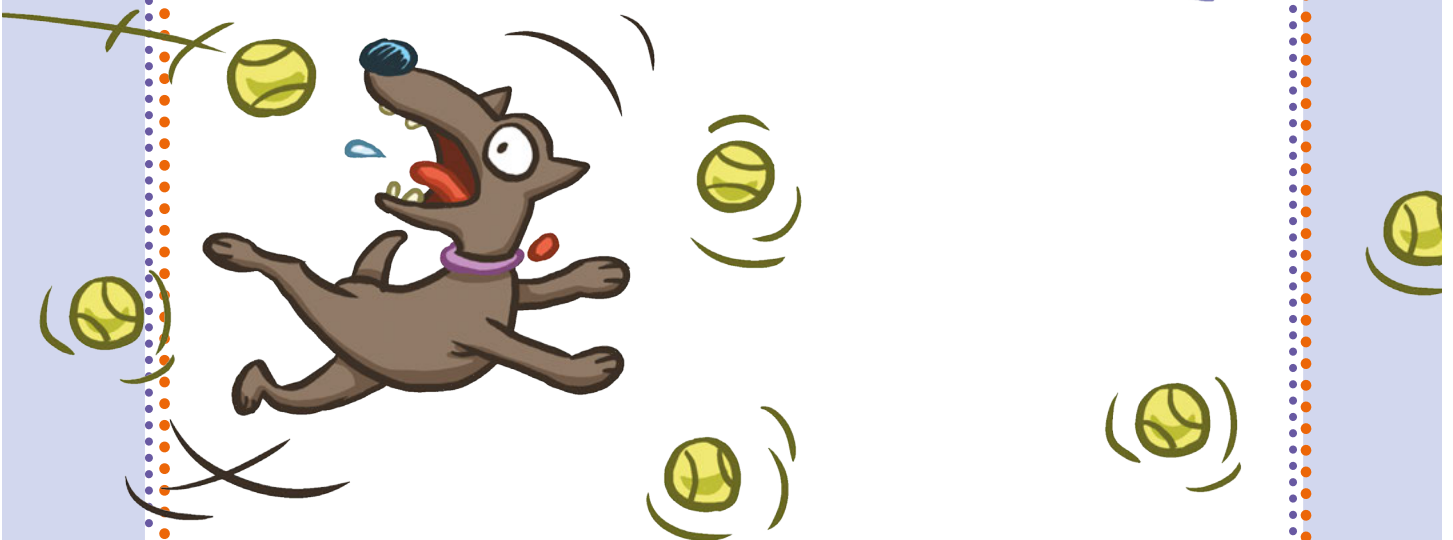
Make a friendship bulletin board or poster together. Brainstorm words about friendship, such as *empathy*, *kind*, *care*, *good sport*, *share*, *listen*, *help*, *ally*, *compliment*, *apology*, *talk about it*. Have children write and decorate the words and scatter them on the board. If you wish, invite kids to add to the bulletin board over time by posting new words or pictures with more ideas about friendship.

About the Author and Illustrator

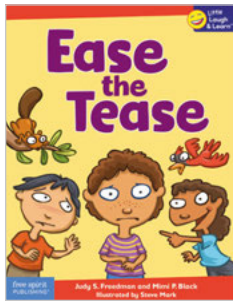
Eric Braun writes and edits books for readers of all ages, specializing in academic and social-emotional topics. Books he has worked on have won awards and honors including the Eugene M. Emme Astronautical Literature Award, a Foreword Book of the Year Gold Award, a Benjamin Franklin Award, and many others. A McKnight Artist Fellow and an Aspen Summer Words scholar for his fiction, he earned an MFA in creative writing from Minnesota State University, Mankato. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two sons.



Steve Mark is a freelance illustrator and a part-time puppeteer. He lives in Minnesota and is the father of three and the husband of one. Steve has illustrated many books for children, including *Ease the Tease!* from the Little Laugh & Learn™ series and all the books in the Laugh & Learn® series for older kids.

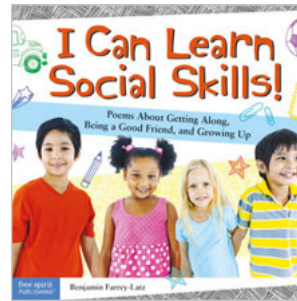


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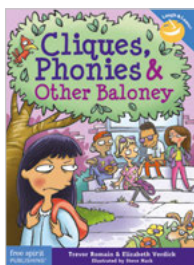
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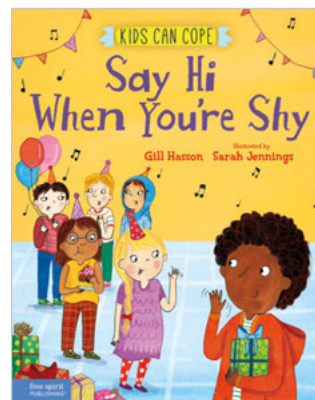
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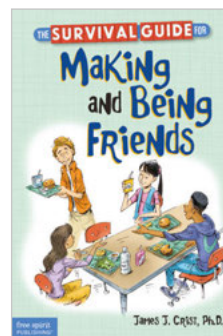
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