

Factsheet for Families

Fostering children's relationships

Ensuring children have the skills to develop and maintain relationships is important to their overall wellbeing and future life course. Children who connect positively with others, manage their feelings effectively and understand others' feelings, often feel accepted and valued and have positive self-esteem and confidence. Adults play an important role in supporting and promoting children's relationships and social skills by observing them and role modelling appropriate interactions as well as providing opportunities for social interactions.

Strategies that will assist children to build positive relationships include:

- providing them with regular opportunities to play with peers by inviting children for play dates or visiting other children on a regular basis
- encouraging them to share and take turns
- modelling positive language and interactions
- discussing emotions with them and acknowledging their feelings
- encouraging them to value the strengths and talents of others
- helping them to solve problems and resolve conflicts appropriately
- setting rules for acceptable behaviour when interacting with others and reinforcing these regularly.

Supporting children experiencing difficulties in relationships

To assist children who are experiencing difficulties in forming or maintaining relationships with others, families can:

- support and encourage them to join in with others and show them how to do this
- spend time with them when they are interacting with peers and give specific verbal prompts if they are experiencing difficulties
- praise them when they interact positively with others
- encourage them to spend time with others who share similar interests or skills
- talk with older children about how they feel, and how they think others might feel
- avoid placing them in busy social situations where they may feel overwhelmed or intimidated.

Facilitating children's friendships and social skills in child care

Children in child care often build longstanding and important relationships with adults and other children, and the messages they receive from those people are significant in shaping their self-image. Child care professionals can promote positive relationships between children by:

- identifying each child's strengths and talking about these with other children
- ensuring that children have choices when interacting with others, such as enabling them to choose to play alone, or with a larger group of children
- respecting children's individual interaction styles and understanding that children interact in different ways and at different times
- having a 'no tolerance' policy towards bullying or exclusion
- encouraging children to interact with children of different ages and abilities
- supporting children to develop the skills to manage relationships, interactions and conflicts with others positively and independently of adults.

To discuss any queries or concerns you may have regarding your child's relationships with others, please speak to:

or telephone: