

Roller Coaster Friendships

As many of you know, finding good friends and developing relationships at school make it so much more fun and enjoyable. However, we also know how incredibly up and down the journey or “the ride” may be. One day your child is best friends with Connor and the very next day your child is no longer playing with Connor or inviting him to his birthday party! Each day brings a new set of circumstances to the relationship.

More often than not children feel as if it is a catastrophe or betrayal when a friend just wants to be alone at the moment. What most children don’t understand is that it is okay to disagree. Social life is not limited to one friend. Children sometimes have difficulty interacting with more than one person at a time, so if a third child comes along, it is common for that child to be rejected. One might hear, “you can’t play with us!” when what is really meant is “I can’t handle so many people at once”.

All children experience some type of rejection from peers. You can help your child take the roller coaster ride in stride and build many lasting friendships. You cannot change your child’s temperament, but you can help him when it comes to selecting friends. For example, is your child gregarious? Or does your child need a little coaching to open up?

Arrange play dates: Your child can benefit immensely from one-on-one play outside of school.

Limit electronics: Playing Xbox or watching a movie isolate children from one another and create little interaction. Board games or imaginative forms of play are better choices for play dates.

Keep concerns/issues in perspective: Do not dwell on the difficulties of a rough day with a particular friend. Children rebound quickly.

Tune in: When your child has a play date, tune into their conversation and take the opportunity to listen to how he/she communicates and solves problems with peers.

Don’t lecture: Be a good listener even if your child’s problems seem trivial. Use role-playing to help figure out other possible scenarios for the next time.

Be patient: As your child matures the ride will be smoother. Your child will have experienced many social situations and will know how they wish to handle differences. There will be less drama and complaints.