



Supporting Social Growth in the School Years

Making friends is a big part of childhood, especially in the early school years. While some children connect effortlessly, others may need a bit of support as they navigate more complex social dynamics. As a parent, you can help by encouraging their efforts and creating space for friendships to grow

Why Early Friendships Matter

Friendships in this stage offer more than just play—they shape emotional health and social development. Positive peer connections help build confidence, teach cooperation and empathy and ease feelings of loneliness. Kids also benefit physically from active play with friends, which supports both mental and physical wellness. These early experiences lay the groundwork for strong social skills that carry into adolescence and beyond.

How Parents Can Support Friendship Building

You can help your child build friendships in simple, supportive ways. Invite classmates over for playdates, make time to connect with kids outside your neighborhood or help your child join clubs or activities that align with their interests. Watch their interactions from a distance and adjust playtime length based on how they get along. If socializing is difficult, help them explore new environments to meet peers who share similar interests.

Modeling Positive Social Behavior

Your child learns a lot about relationships by watching you closely. Show what healthy friendships look like by staying connected with your own friends and being caring, respectful and reliable. At home, create a safe, loving environment where your child feels truly supported. When your child faces a tough moment with friends, listen with empathy and help them name their feelings and think through possible solutions together.

Friendship Is a Lifelong Skill

Helping your child build friendships now gives them valuable, lifelong tools they'll use throughout their life. Early social experiences foster kindness, resilience and emotional awareness. When children feel connected to others and supported by their families, they're better able to navigate the ups and downs of growing up. Encouraging healthy friendships now is a powerful way to help your child thrive. These early bonds can positively shape how they relate to others at school, in future relationships and throughout adulthood.

BHS provides referrals to qualified mental health professionals that can help. To speak to your designated Care Coordinator about your benefits and options for support call BHS at 800-245-1150.