

Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

There is actually an annual day to celebrate your best friends – that dates back to the 1930s! It was on 8th June and we think this is worth a mention for several reasons. Friendships are crucial to good mental health and wellbeing: they can give us a sense of belonging and purpose, reduce our stress levels and increase our happiness, help us cope with difficult life events, put our problems into perspective and bring out the best in us by helping us to adopt healthy habits and avoid the things that have a negative impact on our health [1]. But did you know that according to Aristotle (who was thinking about friendship way before national best friends day existed), there are three types of friends you will have in your life?

1 Changing times

One of these friendship types are 'friends of utility'. These friendships are based around mutual benefit – for example you are in the same class or group. However, once the circumstance changes, so does the friendship.

Whilst friends are important to our wellbeing, not all friendships are meant to last forever and understanding this can help our children and young people through times of transition. Often this type of shift is experienced when they move to secondary school and friendship groups change. Knowing that this is normal can help with the feelings of sadness which often accompany change.

2 Choose wisely

'Friendships of pleasure' are the second group – these tend to be more common among younger people and are often the most short-lived friendships. These friendships are based around enjoyment of a shared interest. For young people who are still exploring what makes them tick and what their interests are, their friendship groups might be liable to change.

However, just as friends can bring out the best in you and encourage healthy habits, the reverse is also true [2]. It can be helpful to make young people aware of this and encourage them to carefully consider the friendship groups they opt into.

3 Character friends

'Friendships of virtue' are what we might call character friends. These friendships are based on shared values and are about wanting the best for the other person. They weather growth and change and include the best elements of the other types of friendship but also have the benefit depth and intimacy [3]. Whilst we all want these types of friends, they take time and conscious effort to cultivate. Therefore, children are unlikely to snag themselves a character friend on the first day of school. However, what they can do is know what is important to them and look for those qualities in their friends.

[1] <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/psychological-benefits-of-friendship>

[2] <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmsa066082>

[3] <https://qz.com/1155649/aristotle-said-there-are-three-types-of-friendship-but-only-one-we-should-strive-for>

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