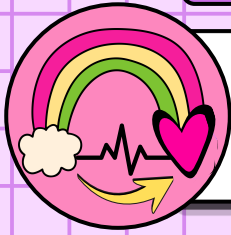


WELLBEING for Little Minds

Autumn

Term

SIMPLE IDEAS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S WELLBEING AT HOME



FOCUS: FRIENDSHIPS & BELONGING

HELPING YOUR CHILD BUILD POSITIVE FRIENDSHIPS, FEEL INCLUDED AND MANAGE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

This half term, we're focusing on friendships and belonging, two important parts of children's wellbeing. Positive friendships can help children feel secure, included and confident, while giving them the skills to manage disagreements, change and the occasional fall-out.



Friendships

Friendships can give children confidence, security and a sense of belonging, but can also be complicated. Children may fall out, feel left out, worry about fitting in or suddenly discover that a friendship has changed. During the Autumn Term, these feelings can become particularly noticeable. New classes and groups have had time to settle, friendships are taking shape and children are beginning to work out where they feel they belong.

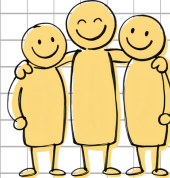
Why does belonging matter?

Feeling that we belong means feeling accepted, included and valued. For children, that does not mean being popular or having lots of friends. A child may feel perfectly secure with one or two close friendships.

What matters is knowing:

- There are people I can spend time with.
- I am accepted for who I am.
- I can ask for help when I need it.
- I do not have to change myself just to fit in.

Positive relationships at school can help children feel supported and connected, while friendship difficulties or loneliness can make school feel much harder.



Try not to measure your child's social wellbeing by the number of friends they have.

One kind, dependable friendship may be far more valuable than being part of a large friendship group.

"Nobody played with me today."

Hearing this can immediately make a parent want to fix the situation, but before jumping in, try to find out a little more. Instead of: "Who left you out?" Try: "Tell me what happened."

A single difficult lunchtime is very different from a child being repeatedly excluded.

Listening first helps you understand which one you are dealing with.

Friendship fall-outs are normal

They might argue over a game, choose different partners, or say something unkind. An argument does not necessarily mean a friendship is over.

Give them the words

When children become upset, they often know how they feel but not what to say. Practising simple phrases at home can help.

Help them build more than one connection

Children sometimes become very dependent on one friendship. Encourage your child to think about friends, rather than feeling that they must have one "best friend".

Give them a chance to resolve the problem

Sometimes adults need to intervene, but giving children the chance to solve manageable friendship problems helps them develop confidence.

When your child is the one who has been unkind

This can be difficult to hear.

It is tempting to immediately defend our children: "They would never do that." But children make mistakes.

They may exclude somebody, copy what another child is doing, lose their temper or say something hurtful. Being told about it does not mean your child is a bad person. It is an opportunity to teach them what to do differently.

Try: "That wasn't a kind choice. What do you think happened because of it?"

Then: "What could you do to put it right?"

The aim is not simply to make children feel guilty. It is to help them develop empathy, responsibility and repair.





Belonging

Belonging means feeling accepted, included and valued by the people around us. For children, it is the feeling that they have a place where they fit in, people they can connect with and the freedom to be themselves without having to change to be accepted.



Friendship problem or bullying?

Not every disagreement is bullying. Children can argue, disagree or occasionally behave unkindly without it necessarily being bullying. However, parents should pay closer attention when behaviour becomes repeated, targeted or deliberately hurtful, particularly when a child feels unable to stop it.

Examples might include:

- repeatedly excluding someone
- deliberately embarrassing them
- spreading rumours
- regularly insulting or putting them down
- threatening them
- deliberately damaging their belongings
- hurting them physically
- repeatedly targeting them online



If something is repeatedly upsetting your child, tell their teacher what has been happening.

Give your child space to explain what happened before offering solutions.

NOTE: Start with facts rather than accusations.

Friendship and screens what helps

As children get older, friendship problems do not necessarily stop when the school day ends.

Group chats, gaming, messaging and social media can make disagreements feel constant.

Try This at home

Tell them: You do not have to reply immediately.

Put the device down.

Wait until they feel calmer.

Read the message again.

Decide whether the conversation would be better face-to-face.



Look beyond the playground

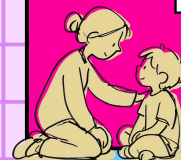
If your child is struggling socially, helping them find places where friendships can grow naturally can be useful.

This might include:

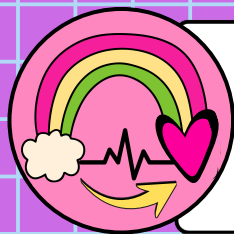
- sports
- art or craft groups
- Scouts or Guides
- music/drama
- library activities
- community groups

Shared activities take some of the pressure away from simply having to make conversation. Children already have something in common to talk about.

Help your child find...



- Someone they love playing football with
- Somebody they sit beside in class
- A friend from swimming or dancing
- Someone they enjoy drawing with
- A neighbour they play with at weekends



Practical things to try at home

For younger children

Friendship Circles

What you need: Paper and pens

Draw three circles inside each other.
In the middle write: My closest people
In the next circle: People I enjoy spending time with
In the outside circle: People I know
Talk about how people can move between the circles over time.
A friend does not have to stay in exactly the same place forever.
Helpful for children who believe losing one friendship means they have no friends at all.



Joining In

What you need: A few toys or figures

Use toys to act out simple playground situations, such as asking to join a game or inviting someone else to play. Practise phrases like "Can I play too?" and "Would you like to play with us?" so the words feel easier to use in real situations.



Friendship Faces

What you need: Paper, pens or crayons

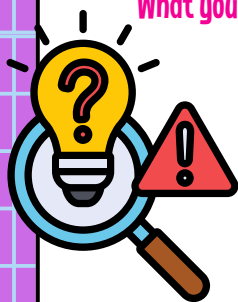
Draw simple faces showing feelings such as happy, worried, lonely, angry and excited. Ask your child what might make a friend feel that way and what they could do to help. This builds empathy and helps children notice how others may be feeling.



For older children

Friendship Problem Solver

What you need: A notebook or piece of paper



Think of a common friendship problem, such as being left out or having an argument. Write down: What happened? How did I feel? What could I say? What could I do next? This helps children slow down, think clearly and practise solving problems rather than reacting straight away.

What Makes a Good Friend?

What you need: Paper and a pen

Ask your child to create a list or poster of the qualities they think make a good friend, such as kindness, honesty, listening, fairness and respect.

Then talk about which of those qualities they already show and which ones they would like to practise more.

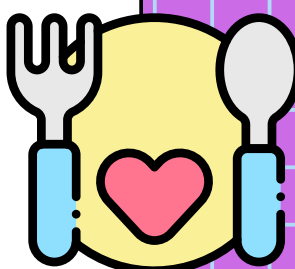


For the whole family

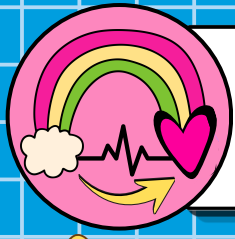
Family Friendship Check-In

What you need: Nothing!

At dinner or another quiet time, each person shares one example of something kind someone did for them, something kind they did for someone else, and one friendship challenge they noticed that week. Keep it relaxed and avoid jumping straight in with solutions. The aim is to make talking about friendships, feelings and relationships feel normal for everyone.



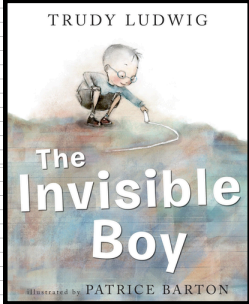
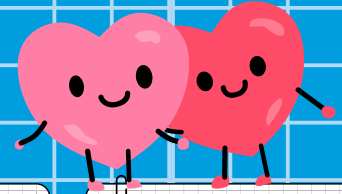
You don't need to run these as formal activities. The best conversations often happen when hands are busy and there's no pressure to perform.



Supporting Friendships & Belonging: Book Ideas



For children



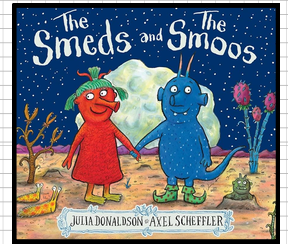
A quiet child who feels overlooked and how one small act of kindness can help someone feel seen and included.



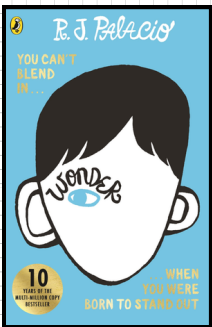
A comforting story about friendship, feelings and the importance of simply listening when someone is upset.



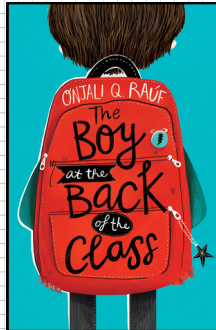
Shows children how small, everyday acts of kindness can make a big difference to the people around them.



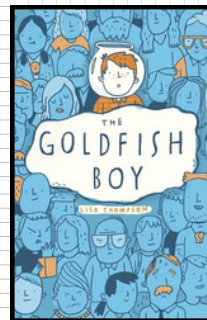
A playful story about friendship across differences and learning that people do not have to be the same to get along.



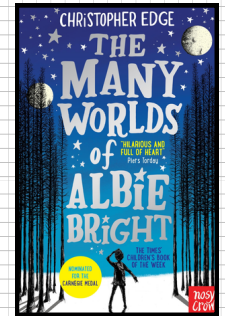
A story about kindness, acceptance and what it feels like to find your place when you feel different from those around you.



Explores friendship, empathy and welcoming someone who is new and may be going through a difficult time.



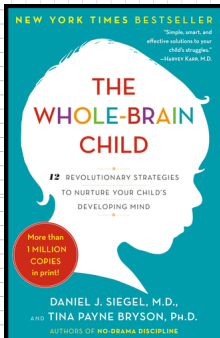
A mystery story that also explores loneliness, anxiety and the importance of connection with other people.



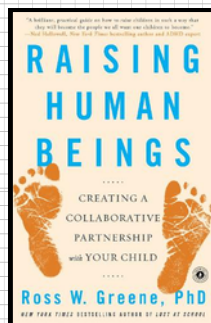
A thoughtful adventure about family, loss and the importance of the relationships that help us feel connected.



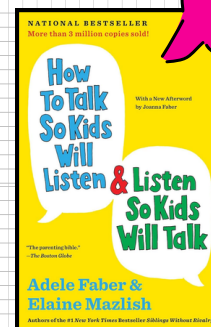
For parents



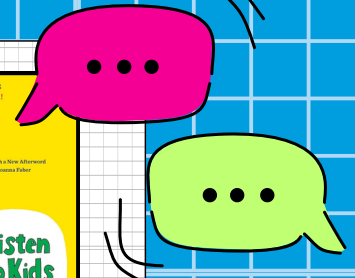
Explains how a child's brain processes change and emotion, with practical strategies for everyday situations.

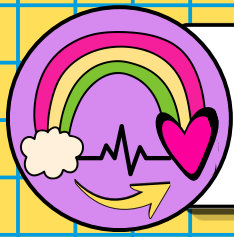


Focuses on helping children solve problems collaboratively and build skills such as empathy, flexibility and communication.



A practical guide to helping children communicate, manage conflict and express difficult feelings more effectively.





Supporting Friendships & Belonging: **Websites**

1

Place2Be

Emotional support and school-based guidance

Advice and resources for parents on children's mental health, relationships, confidence and managing problems at school.

2

NHS

Guidance on children's emotional health

Clear, trusted guidance on recognising when a child is struggling and when to seek additional support.

3

Young Minds

Supports children's relationships with others

Practical advice for parents on children's friendships, confidence, loneliness, bullying and emotional wellbeing.

4

NSPCC

Support for friendships and bullying

Clear guidance for parents on bullying, online friendships, peer pressure and keeping children safe.

5

Childline

Child-friendly support

Child-friendly support covering friendship problems, falling out, exclusion, bullying and difficult feelings.

One Thing to Remember

Our job is not to make every friendship work.
It is to help children learn that they deserve relationships in which they feel safe, respected and able to be themselves, while giving them the confidence and skills to be a good friend to others too.