



## Helping Children with Friendships Handout

### Curiosity

- **Asking questions – being curious:**  
“I wonder if you’re feeling \_\_\_\_?”      “I wonder if you’re worried about \_\_\_\_?”
- **Empathising**  
“Those sound like some really difficult thoughts / feelings to be having”
- **Normalising, making suggestions**  
“Lots of children feel / think about \_\_\_\_\_ when they are worried. Is that like what’s going on for you?” “I remember when I was worried about \_\_\_\_\_”
- **Check their understanding – “does that make sense?” but also yours – “have I understood that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_\_?”**
- **Labelling emotions**  
“I can see that you’re feeling \_\_\_\_\_”

### Encouraging “I” messages

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.

- These statements are NOT about blaming.

For example:

- “You always leave me out”.

vs

- “I felt upset when you left me alone in the playground yesterday”.

- Avoid using ‘always’ and ‘never’.

**Be specific about when the problem has happened.**



## Problem solving - step 1

1. What is the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel about the problem (*Name your feelings*)?

How do they feel (*Name their feelings*)?

What would you like to happen to make things better?

2. List all possible solutions (no matter how weird or wonderful!)	3. What would happen if I chose this solution? (In the short term? In the long term?)	4. Is this plan doable? (Yes/No)	5. How good is this plan? (Rate 0-10)
Never play with them again	Short term: Not playing their game. Long term: Miss the friendship	Yes	2
Offer another game to play	Short: It's fun Long: Might be able to share suggestions	Yes	5
Spend half of the lunch playing their game, then your game	Short: It works well Long: Find a game that you prefer no matter who suggests	Yes	8

6. My plan to try: \_\_\_\_\_

7. How did it go? \_\_\_\_\_



## Parental behaviours that help

- Increase warmth and empathy towards your child
- Maintain clear and firm expectations and boundaries

### AND:

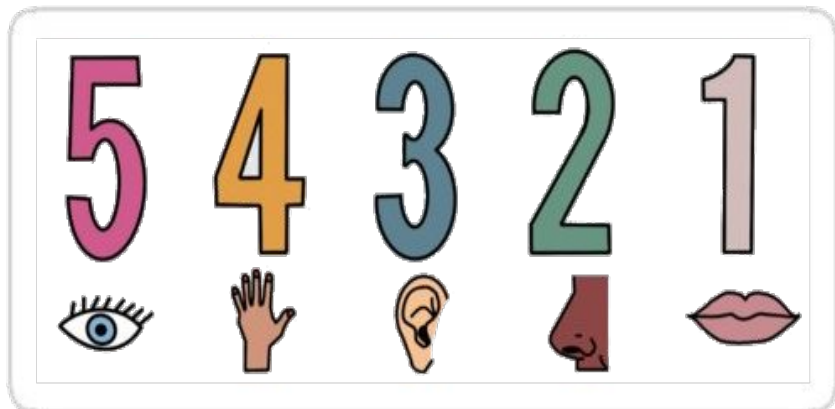
- Provide time and opportunities for contact with peers
- Monitor contact with peers
- Problem solve tricky situations together
- Be clear about what is unacceptable peer behaviour
- Show an interest in other parents and children at the school gate - get to know them, including those that you may not have a natural affinity with.

## Parental behaviours that help

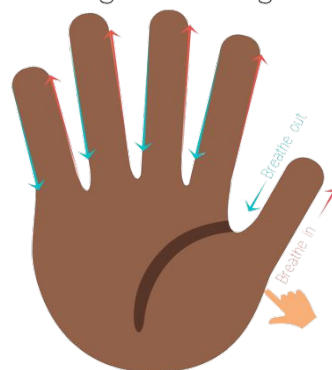
- Harsh and critical attitudes
- Promoting the idea of one best/exclusive friend
- Asking your child about only one or two peers rather than showing an interest in all peers
- Invalidating or dismissive comments such as
  - “dont worry about it!”
  - “just find someone else to play with”
  - “s/he’s not your friend anyway”
- Comparing your child with others/siblings



## Self regulatory and calming strategies



5 Finger Breathing



Imagine you are  
a tortoise and  
bring your  
shoulders up to  
your ears.



Hold your chair  
with both hands  
and imagine  
you're trying to  
lift the chair off  
the floor.



Squeeze all the  
juice out of the  
lemon... then  
relax your hands.