

# The Science of Friendship

Building inclusive relationships

Friendship might feel like an inspired moment but there is **SCIENCE** to friend-making!

The National Inclusion Project "Science of Friendship Method" builds inclusive play for all children, so no one sits on the sidelines. While there is no way to "force" a friendship, this Method improves the possibility that a friendship can be forged between two children.

You have the opportunity to make children of all abilities feel included in your work. It's a powerful position, but we know you can do it!



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Want to get started??  
Turn over to find out how!



# 1 Check Your Attitude

Envision your program being a place where all kids play and no one sits on the sidelines. IT IS POSSIBLE. You just have to be pro-active and intentional about creating an environment where friendship can bloom.

Online Inspiration: Read how professionals, just like you, have used this Method to empower their kids to make friends.

# 2 Know Your Kid – Not Their Diagnosis

Kids with disabilities are motivated in the same ways every kid is. Know the things that make them feel encouraged, their triggers, and the ways for them to be more independent. You can gather these motivations by talking to the child or their parents.

# 3 Be Open to Questions and Comments

Every unanswered question is a detour on the road to friendship. Questions and comments come from curiosity, fear or meanness. Often, questions can sound like meanness. Try this the next time you are faced with a tough question:

- Always start with “What do you mean?” This gives the kid a chance to add more information, but it also allows you to take a breath and answer with patience.
- Then try these conversation starters:
  - › Relate back to the child
  - › Relate back to yourself
  - › Connect the children to explore the answer
- You can also ALWAYS say “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.” But ALWAYS find out. Kids forget nothing.

Online Inspiration: Get in-depth conversation starters.

# 4 Celebrate BOTH Similarities and Differences

Differences without connection lead to separation. Differences with connection make things interesting! Create a safe environment for kids to show their uniqueness. Yep, this is all about making “weird” something that is “cool.”

Online Inspiration: Try our ice-breaker games to lay the foundation for friendship.

# 5 Let Kids Be Kids

Once you’ve planted these seeds, just step back and let them play. You have been intentional with setting up an environment for friendship. Let it grow and bloom!

Online Inspiration: Find simple games every kid can play.

## So how do you know you are successful?

You know friendships are happening when kids are invited to playdates, parties and events outside of your program.

Online Inspiration: Read how much inclusion means to parents of children with disabilities.



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Check out [inclusionproject.org/science-of-friendship/](http://inclusionproject.org/science-of-friendship/)