

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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THE
GOAL

Check out inclusionproject.org/science-of-friendship/

Science of Friendship Toolkit

There is nothing more heartwarming than watching your child make a friend.
The smiles, the giggles, the hugs and the play puts a smile on any face.

By: The National
Inclusion Project



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Proactive Activities for Children

Proactive activities to help include all children

Get Your Trash Out of My Backyard

Objective: Teamwork, physical movement.

Organization: General space that can be divided in half.

Equipment: Cones (if there is not a line in your space), soft balls.

Description: Divide the number of balls in half and spread them around each side. On your signal, the children should begin throwing the balls on the other team's side. The object is to have the least number of balls on your team's side. No one gets out of the game. They should throw the balls up or roll them so that they do not hit anybody. On your signal to stop, the children should freeze while you or a designated child counts the balls on each side. Announce the total, and then quickly begin again. Change the amount of time each time that the kids have to throw.

Elbow Tag

Objective: Running and dodging, fitness.

Organization: Divide the group into smaller groups of three players. In each group players stand together, their elbows linking. To start the game, pick two players—one as the chaser and the other as the chased.

Equipment: None.

Description: Runners run in and out of the three linked-elbow players. The chaser tries to tag the chased. If this happens, the person who gets tagged immediately becomes the chaser and the roles are reversed. This is done to level the playing field for all types of players. When the chaser or chased gets tired, he can hook up with a free elbow. That means four players are hooked up, and the player on the opposite end now takes on the role of the person who just joined. If someone ends up in a particular role for too long, the counselor may ask them to hook up with someone and let another player take their role. They also can stop the game and ask that anyone who has not had a turn raise their hand. Have everyone look to see who needs a turn. This way, everyone will get to have a turn.

This game is good on a hot tired day because the children get a chance to rest in-between running and can judge how long to stay in the game.

Proactive Activities for Children

Clothespin Tag

Objective: Try and capture clothespins from someone else's back without losing yours.

Organization: Make a boundary with cones, lines or jump ropes. Each player is given five clothespins hooked to the back of their t-shirt. Have everyone spread out before starting.

Equipment: Three to five clothespins per player

Description: If someone captures a clothespin, they must go down on one knee while they or their friend pins it to their back, shoulder, wheelchair, etc. No one may take a clothespin from anyone in that position. Anyone who goes out of bounds must give up a clothespin. Neither pushing nor touching or pulling clothes or body parts is allowed; players may only touch the clothespins. Any violators will lose one clothespin to the victim. Optionally, this game may be played with teams.

Parachute Games

Objective: Movement exploration.

Organization: Have all children around the parachute grabbing onto the chute itself if there are not enough rings for everyone.

Equipment: Extra balls that can be stored in a mesh bag, puffballs, rubber chickens and various rubber or bean bag animals.

Description:

- Ripples—have everyone make small and big waves by shaking soft and hard.
- Giant Mushroom—have everyone take three steps in and lift the parachute up high in the air. Let go and let it glide down around everyone.
- Circle Moving—have everyone move around in a circle by walking, skipping, hopping, galloping, etc.
- Popcorn—have everyone make waves and pop balls in the air like popcorn.
- Merry-Go-Round—use a larger ball and have everyone cooperate to get it to move around the parachute.
- Parachute Volleyball—divide into two teams and try to pop balls off the other team's side.
- Jell-O—similar to Giant Mushroom, but instead of letting the parachute go, have everyone pull it down behind their backs, sit down underneath and tuck the parachute under their rears. Then have them rock back and forth to jiggle like Jell-O.
- Switch—pick a characteristic that applies to children; anyone who fits the category will run under the parachute as the rest of the group does Giant Mushroom and switch places.
- Underwater—have several children simultaneously lay under the parachute while the rest of the groups make waves over them.
- Cat and Mouse—have a child crawl underneath as the mouse. Have another crawl on top as the cat trying to chase the mouse. They have 60 seconds to catch the mouse. Rotate the children quickly so those who want to get the opportunity to chase or be chased.

Proactive Activities for Children

General tips

- Vary the program offerings to give all campers a chance to use their strengths. Some campers are good at sports, others are better at arts and crafts, etc. Use that to your advantage and create opportunities for peer interaction. Vary the roles within each of those activities to suit the needs of the camper.
- Create an atmosphere where the whole camp is working toward a common goal. For example, some camps use a golden rule of the week, e.g.: Do Your Best, Show Respect, Be Responsible and Be a Good Friend. Here is a sample of the golden rule in action:
 - At the beginning of camp, we talk about all four and then choose one to work on for the first week. (“Do Your Best” has been chosen for the example.)
 - Talk about and give examples of what it means to do your best.
 - Make an announcement on Friday each week to the whole camp about which team is the Behavior Champion of the week. They get the trophy placed on their table for the entire next week for everyone to see. Make sure the trophy is very visual so that everyone can see it and everyone knows what they are working for.
 - Create a visual reminder, giving a verbal reminder and give the counselors a tool to use to help all campers work together toward the same goal.
 - You also could set it up so that every team is “Champion of the Week,” so every team will have the trophy on their table for a week during the summer.

Icebreaker Games

Icebreaker / Getting to Know You Games

Stand Up

Sit on the ground back to back with your partner with knees bent and elbows linked. Now stand up together. Try it in threes and fours.

Trust Walk

One partner volunteers to be led with his/her eyes closed or blindfolded. The other partner leads the person for five minutes, taking very good care of their blind partner. After five minutes, switch roles.

Knots

Stand in a circle shoulder-to-shoulder. Ask everyone to reach out and grab two hands. They are not allowed to grab the hands of one person nor the people directly next to them. If possible, try not to crisscross. Now, without separating hands, untangle so that all are standing in a round circle again.

Three Ball Pass or Silent Ball

Using something that's easy to catch, establish a pattern around the circle as follows: The leader says someone's name and tosses them the ball, they say someone's name and pass the ball, and on and on until everyone has gone one. Once the leader has the ball again, repeat the pattern until it can be done quickly. Then, after the ball's been tossed around a few times, throw in a second ball using the same pattern sequence, then a third ball.

Challenge: After the group has mastered the pattern, have them reverse it. It also can be played silently, or it could be timed to see how long it takes for the ball to make it around the circle.

Snowball

Each camper writes his/her name on a piece of paper and wads it up, then form two lines facing each other. At a signal, they begin a snowball fight with the wadded up papers. At the end, each camper picks up a snowball and reads the name. They ask that person a question about themselves, and then share it with the rest of the group.

Lineup

Have campers line up in order of birthdate, height, number of family members, alphabetical order of middle name, etc. without talking. This is a good way to get into random groups or to focus/quiet the whole group.

Changes

Have campers get in pairs. Instructions are to look at your partner and notice and remember as much as you can about their appearance. Partners turn back to back and change three noticeable things about their appearance. Campers must guess what changes their partner made.

Parent/Staff Testimonials

From Parents

It was a great experience for my child, she loved everything about it and the staff. She was encouraged to try new activities and she did thanks to the support she had. She can't wait to return. Made lots of new friends, grew up, gained more confidence and independence. GREAT program!

The integration with children with special needs was really great for my daughter. It has taught her compassion and unconditional love for other human beings

They celebrate each others successes. And my son has gotten to form lasting friendships with awesome kids.”

From Staff

These few little things are easily discussed and practiced at pre camp staff training to help emphasize their importance.

Being intentional in everything that we do sets the groundwork for a successful day, week, program and it sets the campers up with the atmosphere and tools to create friendships.

The Science of Friendship is so beneficial to us that the steps are used every day between the staff and kids as well as between the program director and his staff.