

MY GIFTED CHILD WANTS MORE FRIENDS: WHAT CAN I DO?

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OUTLINE

What are the Goals?
Why is Clarification of Goals Important?
What Factors Must be Considered?
What are the Myths Associated with
Increasing Socialization?
What Strategies for Making Friends Work
Best?
Summary

What Are The Goals?

- More invites from others?
- More friends?
- More verbalizations of contentment?
- More texts, emails, and/or calls from friends?
- To motivate them to want more friends?
- More polite interactions with adults?
- More activities with friends?



Why is Clarification of the Goals Important?

- Prevents inadvertent undermining.
- Allows for adjustments in methods, rewards, pace etc.
- Tracks progress and outcome success.



What Factors Must Be Considered?

- Genetics (e.g. introversion/extroversion)
- Time limitations
- Motivational level
- Neurological involvement (e.g. hyperactivity, impulsivity)



What are the Myths Associated with Increasing Socialization?

Myth: Parents can't set up play dates for older children

Actually, parents can be the BEST at picking friends for the gifted. (as long as they don't know that their parents are doing it!)



Myth: The more the merrier!

Never! Actually, one-on-one is always best. Three is a recipe for disaster. Since four or more may create an overwhelming social environment, the gifted may prefer isolation or feel left out.



Myth: Trying out new activities is preferable.

No! Our darlings need "tried and true" options. No surprises. Try to plan, predict, and prepare for as many scenarios as possible. A trial run at the site of the play date seems excessive, but offers a level of comfort/predictability.



Myth: Sleepovers are a great way to start a friendship.

Definite potential for failure! All initial activities need to be short. (e.g. one hour or so.) Long engagements may be going so well that they might want them to last forever. Don't give in to the temptation! If the "Honeymoon Period" wears off during the first encounter, they may never want to get together again.



Myth: Social skills groups are the best at teaching strategies for socialization.

It's sad, but the skill sets may not generalize easily to new environments. Specific feedback, individualized instruction, rewards, and practice often work best.



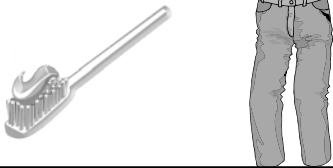
Myth: It's easy make friends even if their family members do not have close relationships.

Actually, the easiest way to make friends is when the family members already belong to a social group (e.g. church, boating club, baseball team, book club.)



Myth: Hygiene and attire are secondary.

Showering, brushing teeth, clothing, and brushing hair really influence a first impression. Believe it or not, these factors may completely make or break a friendship.



Myth: Periodic contact can maintain a relationship.

Nope! The memory of a great social engagement can fade if not followed up by additional enjoyable contacts. Regularly scheduled short activities work well.



Myth: Play dates at home are best.

Maybe they are best for the gifted, but play dates should be designed so that the other child has fun. Pairing your child with a guaranteed good time (e.g. Incredible Pizza Co.) will increase the desire for the other child to want to play with your child again.



Myth: Empathy and sharing always come naturally.

Wouldn't that be wonderful? Most have compassion and sensitivity, but many struggle with "seeing the world through someone else's eyes." Sometimes it helps to ask, "Do you want to have friends or do you want to be right?"

What Strategies for Making Friends Work the Best?

Five Things We Can Do:

1. Learn skills

- Listening
- Maintaining eye contact
- Asking questions
- Respecting personal space
- Sharing



2. Practice Skills

- Roleplaying
- Trial runs
- Try alternative techniques



3. Select three potential friends

- Find peers with common interests
- Match personalities
- Pursue family friends
- Make contact with all



4. Schedule one-on-one activity

- Select an enjoyable activity
- Ask at least a week before the date of the activity
- Prepare for all possibilities
- Keep the engagement brief



5. Follow up

- Send a short "thank you" email
- Indicate that a future event is desired
- Wait at least a week to ask again
- Find a regularly scheduled activity to attend



Summary

- To help the gifted with social skills you need to set goals and clarify them.
- There are many myths about socialization that are not true.
- There are five steps to increase the socialization. 1. Learn skills 2. Practice skills 3. Select three potential friends 4. Schedule one-on-one activity 5. Follow up.
- Keep trying!

Thank You!

And...

Good Luck!