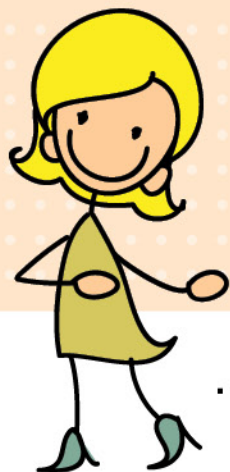


# Friendship MATTERS

## Social Skills Program

For  
kids  
from  
5 to 8



...Because friendship really does matter!



### Why are social skills so important?

Social skills are fundamental to a child's development as happy, well-adjusted human being. They enable them to develop positive relationships with others in a variety of social situations. The ability to interact effectively with others is essential for the development of self-esteem and a sense of well-being. Social skills also play an integral role in enabling children to feel accepted by their peers and in fostering their resilience for dealing with life's many challenges. Many children learn social skills automatically, but others do not. For parents of children who seemingly lack this innate ability, this can be extremely worrying. If left unchecked, a lack of social skills can lead to social isolation, bullying, low self-esteem and other mental health issues.

### How can learning social skills in a group setting help?

For those children who struggle with social skills, learning these skills in the safe and nurturing environment of a small and highly structured group can be of enormous benefit. Friendship MATTERS is a group-based program which has been specifically designed to teach children these fundamental skills which form the building blocks for successful social interactions and friendships.

The program structures this learning in a fun and engaging way so as to increase the child's confidence in using these skills in their everyday life. Learning is maximized by providing the children with a positive group experience with other children their own age.

### What is the Friendship MATTERS program?

The Friendship MATTERS program has been specifically designed for children between the ages of four and eight years of age who find interacting effectively with other children their own age challenging. The program is suitable for children who are shy, delayed in their acquisition of age-appropriate social skills or who are relatively high functioning on the Autism spectrum. The program is made up of two levels, each consisting of six sessions which are conducted over six consecutive weeks.

**Level 1** of the program introduces the children to the fundamental elements of effective social skills, whereas

**Level 2** expands on some of the more subtle aspects of social interactions, including emotional awareness and problem solving.

Topics covered in the program include:

- Initiating social interactions
- Conversation topics - what do I talk about?
- Listening skills

- Conversation skills - including turn-taking
- Understanding feelings - both mine & others
- How to be a friend
- Solving problems with friends

Our groups are intentionally kept small, with a high adult-to-child ratio, to ensure that we can best accommodate each child's unique learning needs.

Time is also spent with parents at the end of each session to provide them with useful information to assist them in supporting their child to develop these skills further. The more the children are able to practise these skills within the context of their everyday lives, the more they will become second nature to them.

Our primary goal is to provide the children with a safe and nurturing group learning experience in which they can successfully cultivate effective social skills at the same time as having fun. We also endeavour to provide parents with the necessary skills to support their child in their on-going development of these fundamental life skills. By laying the foundations of good social skills, our aim is to nurture happy, well-adjusted children.



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