



Open Door for Parents

With Dr. Eileen

When Your Child... Has Trouble Making Friends

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Hi! Welcome to Open Door for Parents where I share ways to support your child's feelings, friendships and mental health. I'm Dr. Eileen. Today I want to talk about what to do when your child has trouble making friends.

A big thing that tends to stand in the way of kids making friends is what I call *The Magnet Myth of Friendship*. This is the belief that they have to be so amazing and wonderful that they attract friends to them the way a magnet attracts metal.

There are two problems with this: First, this is a very one-sided view of friendship. It might be fun to be the magnet, but no one wants to be the metal. If kids are looking for “Wow, you’re so great!” reactions, they’re not looking for friends; they’re looking for fans.

Second, The Magnet Myth puts a lot of pressure on kids when they believe it, because they think they have to be amazing to deserve friends. It makes them look in the wrong direction, judging themselves and maybe even focusing on their flaws, instead of looking outward and thinking about what they can give and what they have in common with others.

Real friendships are about connecting rather than impressing. Think of two overlapping circles. One circle represents your child, the other represents another kid. Friendships begin in the overlap.

If your child is talking about something that’s true only of them, that’s irrelevant to starting a friendship. If there’s no overlap between your child and the other kid, they’re probably not going to become friends.

Kids make friends mostly by doing fun things together. Instead of trying to be impressive, help your child think about: What do they like to do with other kids? That could be a good path toward friendship.

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