

Supporting Healthy Friendships

Why Are Friendships Important?

- Good friends can help you celebrate good times and support you during bad times
- Friendships can help by:
 - Improving your sense of belonging and purpose
 - Boosting your feelings of happiness and reducing your stress
 - Increasing your self-confidence and self-worth
 - Helping you cope with traumas, such as a serious illness, job loss or the death of a loved one
 - Encouraging you to change or avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise



It's Good to Have Friends

- Friends are there for each other, hopefully over a long period of time
- People need only a few very close friends to help them get through life's challenges
- Friends help each other to lead fuller and more enjoyable lives
- When people have friends, everything is better!

Friendships and the Individuals We Support

- As support staff, you may develop a close relationship with someone you support
 - It is important to remember that over time, your job can change
 - At some point, you may no longer be there for that person
- An important part of your job is to help the individuals you support make friendships that will last over time
 - This helps people lead much fuller and more enjoyable lives
 - When they have friends and family in their lives, everyone wins!

What Is a Healthy Friendship?

- DSPs can assist individuals they support to make friends by talking about what healthy friendships looks like
- A true friend doesn't come and go...
 - A true friend stays connected
 - A true friend listens to your concerns
 - A true friend is there for you during ups and downs

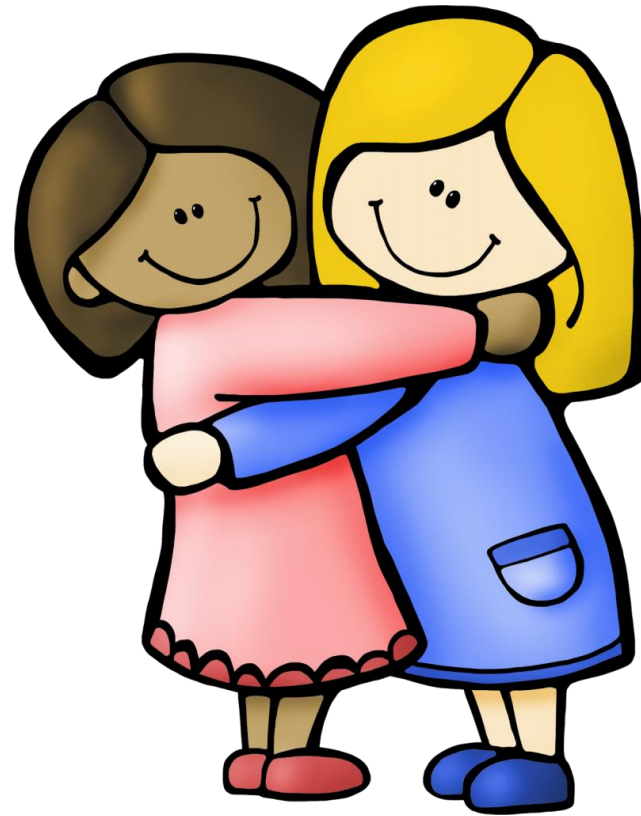


Talk about Healthy Friendships with the Individual You Support

- Talk about what a real friend looks like, sounds like, and acts like
 - For example, friends talk to and listen to each other
 - They also show sympathy and understanding when needed
 - They say nice things to each other
- All of these things serve to build trust and strengthen a friendship

Help the Individual You Support Understand What a Healthy Friendship Means

- It usually means feeling good, feeling safe, and feeling supported
- In any friendship, there may be times when there are disagreements
- In a healthy friendship, people talk and work things out



Help the Individual You Support Understand What an Unhealthy Friendship Means

- Signs of an unhealthy friendship might include ongoing feelings of:
 - Fear
 - Sadness
 - Anger
- Make sure individuals know where to go and who to talk to when they have these feelings



Additional Resources

- Healthy lifestyle and adult health:
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860>
- Friendships in People with Intellectual Disabilities:
https://shriver.umassmed.edu/sites/shriver.umassmed.edu/files/QINA%20Friendship_final_web2.pdf
- Making Friends Where You Live – Friendship Toolkit:
<http://thearcofmass.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FRIENDSHIP-TOOLKIT-WHERE-YOU-LIVE-2018-online.pdf>