

## Appreciating Friendship

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### Abstract

This article will help teachers to understand the importance of friendship among students. It will also highlight how the friend circle helps develop their personalities. The teachers should understand the bond between students and the activities in which they are involved. They can use the energy between the two individuals to construct a positive learning environment in the class. The discussion about the students' friendship should not be limited to the staff rooms, but it should be part of the lesson plan of the teachers, and also, it should find some space in the curriculum. Parents should also understand the importance of friendship. Children befriend other individuals based on their interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, etc. and based on these, and they try to indulge in as many activities as possible. By knowing about their child's friends, parents can learn a lot about their child. Teachers and parents can use friendship and this positive energy to improve the child's personality.

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Friendship is a bond that connects two individuals; however, its expression can vary for different people. Some might like going out together or doing any activity, while some enjoy talking, and for some, it can be just being together even if they are not doing anything. The underlying principle behind friendship is that two individuals have something in common; it might be interests, experiences, values, etc. It is a universal phenomenon. All individuals, regardless of their social or economic status, have friends with whom they can comfortably share their joys, sorrow, problems and ups and downs. Thus, it can be said that the friendship between two individuals is based on mutual trust, support, and companionship. They trust one another and feel that they will stand together in thick and thin, and by doing so, they enjoy each other's company.

Being around your friends feels like a safe zone where there is no feeling of being judged, and you can talk freely about what is happening in your mind. For instance, a person may not be comfortable sharing their thoughts openly in front of others as they may feel judged and unable to express their views adequately. But the same person can be very expressive and communicate openly with friends. As friends, they would have developed a level of trust,

allowing them to share their thoughts and feelings without fearing judgement which can lead to a good conversation. A good discussion among friends can help to understand the perspective of others and can lead to new ideas and solutions. It can also help people to vent their feelings.

Friendship is an unmediated bond in which individuals have grown together, learn from each other and have a deeper understanding of each other's weaknesses and strengths. They know what their friends think and how they may respond and react. Someone can have a small circle of one or two close friends, best friends, or a large group of friends. It differs from person to person.

It is often considered that the first friend an individual makes outside the family is in school. School is a minuscule society where students from different backgrounds come together. It is a secondary socialising agency, which shapes a child's personality, and friends play an instrumental role in doing so. It allows students to interact and indulge in activities that help develop their bonds.

Students start as companions or classmates, and when the two of them hit it off, they may develop a bond that lasts throughout their life. Peers also share something in common with their

companions, like a classroom, similar bus route, extracurricular activity or the same sports team. When two students share something more than that, then they might become friends. For instance, they may share hobbies and interests and have similar preferences for people and humour, and once they become friends, they would choose their friends over classmates. They like to play games together and can participate in different events, which can lead to better results. When they become friends, it becomes epiphenomenal to the activities, which means now they do not require any recreational activity to connect.

In school, the students share a lot of moments with their friends in which they are applauded or punished by the teachers, share inside jokes, tease one another, and call each other using different names. All these things become integral to our school life, significantly impacting an individual's social development. These interactions can help develop social skills such as sharing, cooperating, listening, belongingness, etc. In addition, the ministering role of friends can work as a supplement to their friends in the activities they are involved in, as friends can powerfully impact an individual's choices, attitudes, and actions.

As we say, every child is unique, and different values are embedded in them; however, friends can positively and negatively influence an individual. Positive peer pressure can help an individual perform better in academics, sports and extracurricular activities, maintain a healthy lifestyle, etc. Thus, it creates a positive impact on the physical and mental health of the individuals. Whereas if the students are not guided properly, especially during adolescence, then they can get involved in the activities like drug abuse, physical abuse, pornography, etc., and it negatively impacts the social development of the child. They might acquire the habits of dishonesty, lying, thieving, etc.

The importance of friendship is neglected in schools. It is considered something trivial and disruptive. The discussion of the students and their friend circles is limited to the staff rooms only as the teachers discuss the activities in

which the students are indulged and how some of these groups disturb their prepared activity due to a lack of interest. If they have two friends in a class who are very talkative, they identify them as the disturbing elements of the class. Most of the time, they try to separate them to maintain discipline in class. And by doing so, they often overlook the possibility of using this energy to achieve something which can benefit the whole class.

C.S. Lewis has said that friendship can be seen as a sort of succession or a rebellion, which is why authorities frown on friendship. This frowning can be seen in a classroom when a teacher prepares any activity or lesson. Still, during the activity, if a group of friends lose attention, they can distract the whole class, and the teacher can lose their authority. The students can ask unrelated questions, and their friends may support them. This can lead the teaching-learning process in a different direction.

Friendship is valuable for school children. However, teachers try to undermine it as they feel the students waste their time indulging with their classmates in non-academic activities. They just want students to focus on their academics. But teachers can use friendship in classroom management as the teachers aware of the students' friendship can also provide support and guidance to help their students navigate any social challenges they may face. It was said by Aristotle that "friendship helps the young to keep from error." Teachers can use these friendships to promote positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour. Friends working together can create a supportive learning environment, providing a space for the learners to feel safe expressing themselves, asking questions, and making mistakes. If two friends are doing the same activity, they might perform it better.

Friends can have a significant impact on a student's emotional well-being. So much so that students cannot open up with their parents and teachers; instead need their friends to listen. Students are afraid to share things with their families and teachers because they fear how they will react to the situation. As there are things

considered fun by the students, they get a good scolding when they talk about these activities to their parents or teachers. So they try to keep these activities restricted to their friend circles. However, if teachers and parents are unaware of the child's actions, this can lead to more significant problems. For example, if a child decides to bunk a class with their friend and later tells about this incident to their parents. In response, the parents would want to scold the child and give a strict warning not to do such a thing again. This will not be good for them as the child might bunk class the next time and not even tell their parents about the incident and eventually bunk the whole school altogether. This will also create a gap between the child and their parents. If the parents listen to their child and deal with this situation more composedly, then the child will not hesitate to tell their parents everything, and then parents can guide their child as to why such activities are not considered right.

The teachers can incorporate the bond between the students in their pedagogy to improve the learning outcomes in the class. This can be done by having peer group activities, in which students can work collaboratively on any projects and assignments in the class. They can also use peer mentoring in the class, where

students can help their friends who need extra support.

The teachers can strike a balance between being friendly to the students as well as maintaining professionalism. As a result, a positive learning environment is created in which the students will feel safe and supported. They will also not hesitate to ask the teachers questions and can share any problem they might be facing in school. This way, students will thrive both academically and socially. The parents should also be friendly with their child so that the child will not hide things from their parents. They can communicate openly and honestly with their child by being good listeners, showing empathy and offering guidance to them. Thus the students can share their problems with the teachers and their parents more freely and openly if they feel accepted by them, just as they do with their friends, which will eventually help in developing healthy personalities. This will help in the better overall development of the child.

Friendship remains one of the most beautiful bonds formed in a person's life, and its importance must be addressed, but it is severely undermined in educational institutions, which shouldn't be the case today.