

Editorial

People usually think they have many friends. Whenever there are festive occasions, there are many people around us. Thirty some classmates and a long list of "friends" in our facebook and MSN accounts may also make us feel so. But, what does friendship mean? Friends are not just boredom killers or playmates for entertainment. They accompany us when we grow up, care about us, share our happiness and burden, support us at difficult times. When you have worries, talking with friends may lift off some of the burden. At the crossroads where you do not know where to go, a word of encouragement becomes your cheer. When you did something wrong, your friends were there to forgive you, give advice and remind for turning back.



We do not earn friends by being good-looking, paying money or giving advantages. We attract friends by being honest, sincere and understanding. No matter how far between us and how frequent we contact each other, we have different kinds of friends, who bring colors and vigor to our lives. In the feature article of this issue, our clinical psychologist encourages us to devote our time and our heart to make friends and learn how to be a friend of our friends.

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Winning Magic to Friendship Building

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Introduction In Harry Potter, three good friends came together to fight against the evil wizard for years. We may be touched by the genuine friendship that was depicted in the story. They loved to spend time with each other. They played and learnt together.

They cooperated, understood and supported each other when they encountered difficulties. These are important elements in a friendship. How do you make friends? What kinds of people do you like to be with? Do you show your support and render your assistance when they need one?

Importance of Friendship

We get pleasure from and overcome difficulties with our friends' company. We do not only make friends but we gain improvement and personal growth at the same time. Building friendship benefits us in the following ways:

(1) *Develop our self concept*

We get to know ourselves better through our friends' feedback on our behaviours. By observing the difference between ourselves and others, we can establish a unique self concept.

(2) *Learn interpersonal skills*

Through interacting with people, we learn different interpersonal skills such as how to express our points of view in an appropriate manner and tone and to accept others' comment when facing criticism. We can also practise how to resolve conflicts, learn various play rules and provide assistance to others who need help.

(3) *Learn from others and develop yourself*

Everyone has his own strength. We can enhance our knowledge and improve ourselves by learning from each other.

(4) *Care and support each other*

Pleasure and joy come with others' company. When we encounter difficulties, support, help and encouragement from our friends help relieve our stress.



Building friendship

There are times when we have setbacks and disappointment in the course of building friendship. Through reading the following scenes where the students interact with his friends or classmates, let's find out what we should pay attention to when we build friendship with others.

Case 1

Charles is a P.2 student. He is verbal and he likes to express his ideas when he does group project with classmates. He likes to make decision and assign tasks for group members. He is enthusiastic when he is assigned the role of subject leader by teacher. Classmates often mock at him about being "the leader".



Friendship is built on mutual support and cooperation. Early primary school students may still be self-centered, without being aware of others' need. While praising for Charles' leadership, encouraging his sharing and cooperation with others are equally important. When leading group work, student leader can pay attention to others' reaction and participation and learn to understand others' viewpoint step by step. Avoid butting in to express our view and it is always better to listen first.

In addition, if we dominate the discussion and just assign tasks to others during group work, other members will not have chance to participate. They may not want to be our friends as a result. We can learn to take turns so that all can take part in the discussion. When intending to lend a helping hand, saying "May I help you?" does let us know whether others are willing to accept the offer of help. Usually, people like to accept it when it is a sincere one.

Case 2

Billy who is in his P.4 often tells jokes in class. He makes others laugh or attend to him by exaggerated body gestures. His classmate, Ben, often echoes other's jokes or follows others to make fun of other classmates. Yet, when teachers invite Billy and Ben to express their ideas in class, they lack confidence to give a try.

If student cannot get peer recognition by their academic achievement, they may seek other ways to obtain satisfaction. One can only create short duration of laughter by attention seeking behaviours. Playing tricks on others or following others' behaviour blindly is not a way to develop confidence or gain recognition. Echoing is not the only way to make friends. On the other hand, it may hurt other classmates when one copies others' misbehaviours blindly.

When a student is attention seeking or blindly following others, it may reflect that he is unconfident or lacks appropriate skill to build friendship. We can help him to develop a positive self image by developing his potential, letting him take up more responsibility and help others. Through sharing and helping others, friendship will develop and recognition will be gained.

Case 3

Vienna studies in P.6. She is rigid. She often complains to her teacher and mother that others make fun of her, such as, dropping her workbook intentionally when the classmate passes it to her. Some classmates invite others to isolate her after they were being complained by Vienna. Some follow the suggestion blindly. As a result, Vienna does her homework alone during recess.

To avoid misunderstanding by being rigid in thoughts, one can remind oneself to "stop and think" when facing interpersonal conflict and do not conclude yourself as the victim prematurely. We need to be calm and rational as if we are a detective analyzing the various possibilities of the situation and finding evidence to support the assumptions. For example, we can ask ourselves: "Does the classmate intend to do this?". If the answer is yes, we can express the feeling of discontent peacefully and suggest ways to improve, such as, "I am disturbed by the way you pass me the workbook. How about you tell me first next time so that I can get hold of it in time." If the answer is no, we need to learn to accept others' occasional fault.



When we are rejected, we should evaluate what we can improve. Our tone of voice and manner can determine whether others are willing to make friends with us. People like to be friends with those who are polite, willing to listen, appreciate, and apologize. If we do this to others, it will increase the chance for them to do it to us in return.

By improving our empathy, putting yourself in other's shoes and understanding other's situation, we shall interact better with others. Everyone is unique. Although we do not like all the people we meet, we should not reject them right away. When we learn to compromise with others, we can find a solution that both of us can benefit. If the rejection problem is severe, e.g. when a classmate exaggerates our problem, or threatens others not to be our friend, we must seek help from the teachers.

Case 4

Jack is introverted and quiet. His classmates think that he cannot express his ideas well. After he is promoted to S1, when doing group projects, he is often not assigned to present as others regard his presentation skill as poor. He is given a lot of preparatory work instead which he feels too much. Yet, he has not expressed his discontent to other members.

Through expressing our points of view and needs to others, people get to know us and can connect with us in a better way. If we avoid talking in front of other people because we are unconfident about our verbal ability, a negative self image will be formed gradually. Learning to appreciate our strength and accept our weakness is one of the keys to positive self image. Verbal ability is only one aspect of many. It does not determine our achievement. If collecting and organizing information is our strength, we can gladly use it to the fullest and complete the task with other members with concerted efforts. In this way, your classmates will notice your cooperativeness and conscientious attitude, benefiting the development of friendship.

If a family can create an environment where members can express their emotion and needs peacefully, student learns to express their needs because they know that family members will listen to him. The child may be able to generalize the skills at school. Student can practise presentation skills under low stress provoking environment. For example, we can join discussion about topics of our interest or strength. If we are yet to be fluent verbally, we can use our nonverbal skills such as eye contact and tone of voice to supplement, which are also important elements of communication. Together with vivid content, our audience can receive the messages more easily. Student can also start with activities that demand less verbal skills at the beginning to have more opportunities to get along with others. Later, we can join more varieties of activities to brush up the verbal skills, such as how to start a conversation, greet others, respond to questions or change discussion topics.

Case 5

Tracy who studies in S3 likes to share with her friends about her secrets. She regards the friends whom she has shared her secret with as her best friends. Yet, sometimes she suspects that these friends have gossiped about her. When she sees that her friends chat happily with each other in the first recess but becomes silent when they are with her in the second recess, she becomes sad and felt being rejected. She suspects that her friends do not enjoy being with her anymore.

During adolescence, students showed more concern over reciprocal trust among each other. They like to share with others their feelings and secrets which may increase the level of intimacy among them. Yet, we have to consider whether the person is trustworthy when we disclose ourselves. In order to help students be more equipped with the relevant skill, teachers and seniors can guide the thinking about expectation on friendship, how we should trust other people and what to share with our good friends. Students can make reference to the past experience of their teachers and parents. Sharing secret is not the only way to make good friends, nor does it equate that the one whom you share your secrets with is your good friend. In addition, you cannot guarantee that he or she will always keep the secrets.

If we think that others do not like to be with us, we should evaluate objectively before jumping to a conclusion. Some maladaptive thoughts such as, "She does not talk to me. That means she must not want to be my friend anymore!", should be avoided. Try to find evidence for your thought before making a conclusion. Is it supported by objective evidence? Or is it just created out of our subjective feelings? When our



friends join other activities and get to know some other new friends, we can still be friends. We should remind ourselves not to judge prematurely but find supportive evidence for our query. If necessary, talk to a trusted friend or adult for more advice.

Case 6

Gloria who studies in S5 is longing for other's care and concern. She goes online in Facebook and chats with her friends frequently. She spends a lot of time browsing other's updates and leaving messages for others. She cares about whether her messages have been noticed or if others have commented on it. Sometimes when she sees other people sharing photos of their gathering, she feels lonely because she does not have such close friends.

The internet provides a platform for updating and connecting with people. Yet, it may be difficult to develop genuine and trustworthy relationship in the internet world. Social networking on internet is only one of the ways that we can communicate with our friends. Interacting directly with our friends is yet the best way to develop friendship. Through direct interaction, we can observe other's behaviours and needs, listen to their tone of voice, talk to them in appropriate manner, feel their feelings and offer our care and concern. In these ways, we can improve mutual understanding and trust, leading to genuine friendship.

There is no short-cut to develop friendship. Youngsters should be encouraged to keep patience and not to urge for a close friend within short period of time. The unreasonable time spent on the internet can be spent more effectively in direct interaction with people. A balance of time should be struck between both channels of communication. Joining activities at school or voluntary organizations is a good way to enlarge our social circle and increase our chance to get along with others. Last but not least, we should strive to improve our inner qualities such as manner, communication skills, emotion management skills and self esteem so that we can become a lovable person. When we put more effort in learning to be a good friend, we will one day find our own chum.



Conclusion



The three good friends in Harry Potter do not wave their magic wands to make friends. They obtain genuine friendship through showing their care to each other. Same as in real life, having similar personality, hobby or experience may bring us together. Yet, we need to strive to sharpen our skills in communicating and interacting with people. Observing and caring for others' need, expressing ourselves, building a trusting relationship and interacting harmoniously with others will be the winning magic to friendship building.

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You would share your happiness with your friends and seek their help when there are difficulties. Friends play an important role in our life. Therefore, we should have a thankful heart for the happiness our friends bring and treasure our precious friendship. Below are our students' views on friends.

Friends are like stars in the sky. Friends are always there to support you even when you do not meet each other very often.



Friends are invaluable, we can't buy friends with whatever amount of money.

Friends would tell you what are wrong and give you a chance to improve.



Sincere encouragement from friends gives us a pleasant feeling.

Friends should respect each other.



If we have friends in school life and daily life, we are more happy and make better progress.



Friends support each other.



To communicate with friends is very free, with no ceremony needed.



Frank communication between friends deepens the relationship and decreases misunderstanding. Communication needs time, sincerity and patience. Good communication skills help us a lot in building friendships.

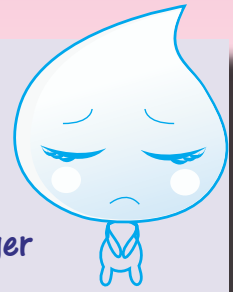
Letter Box,

Hi, my name is Yan Ching and I am a form one student. I had 2 good friends, Daisy and May. We used to be very good friends. We quarreled quite often but we resolved it very soon. However, since our last quarrel, we were not good friends anymore. I talked about this matter with my younger sister only but no one else.

I had another friend Judy from another class. She was much disliked by Daisy and May. One day, Daisy found that Judy was not selected to join the preparation work of our school celebration and asked me to tell her the MSN contact of Judy. Daisy wanted to tease at Judy. I thought that Daisy was just joking and would not really do that, so I gave her Judy's MSN contact. After some time, Judy treated me coldly. I guessed that Daisy had teased Judy and Judy thought that it was me who told Daisy to do so. I called Daisy and asked her whether she did that. She said no and I hanged the phone. Next day, Daisy and May scolded me and said I asked such a question because I suspected and distrusted them. I ran away and decided not to care about them anymore. We became strangers since then.

I really want to know whether "asking" equals to "suspicion" or "distrust"? Anyway, I've got other friends and I am now very happy, except I am still uncomfortable about what has happened before.

Yan Ching



Dear Yan Ching,

Thank you for your letter. You mentioned about the relationships with your friends and some problems getting along with them. This gave you some feeling of discomfort.

Judy was someone Daisy and May disliked. It was understandable that it was not easy for you to stay in the middle. In this kind of relationship, paying respect is very important. For example, you would better have Judy's agreement before you disclose Judy's MSN contact to Daisy. Also, when any of you felt discomfort in the relationship, frank communication to express your thoughts, feelings and concerns would improve your understanding towards each other. You thought that Judy treated you coldly because she might think you told Daisy to tease at her. Have you considered other possibilities? If you judged too quickly, it might lead to misunderstanding and distrust.

Apart from communication, understanding and forgiveness are also important. When Daisy and May scolded you, you stopped your contact with them right away. In fact, you might try to explain to them what has happened and let them understand your situation. You might also know their feelings at the same time. "Asking" simply means having a question or being unclear about something. It is fine to ask and answer questions between friends. "Asking" usually does not mean mistrust unless the tone and attitude of the conversation make someone feel like that. One needs not make a guess of "distrust" when being asked a question.

Judy, Daisy and May were once your good friends. It is really a pity if you become strangers. I suggest you get into contact with them again. Your sincerity and understanding may help you carry on your friendship. Your willingness to share with your sister and having new friends give me an impression that you like to make friends. I hope you keep up your effort to make friends and maintain friendship with them.

Wish you progress in building friendship with your friends.

Health Box

Interesting knowledge Q&A

Q: Which of the following is the desirable behaviour or attitude in building friendship?

- A:
- a) Pick fault in a friend.
 - b) Notice the emotion and need of a friend.
 - c) A tooth for a tooth if a friend hurts me.
 - d) Hurt a friend when making jokes.

(Answer: find it out from the newsletter)

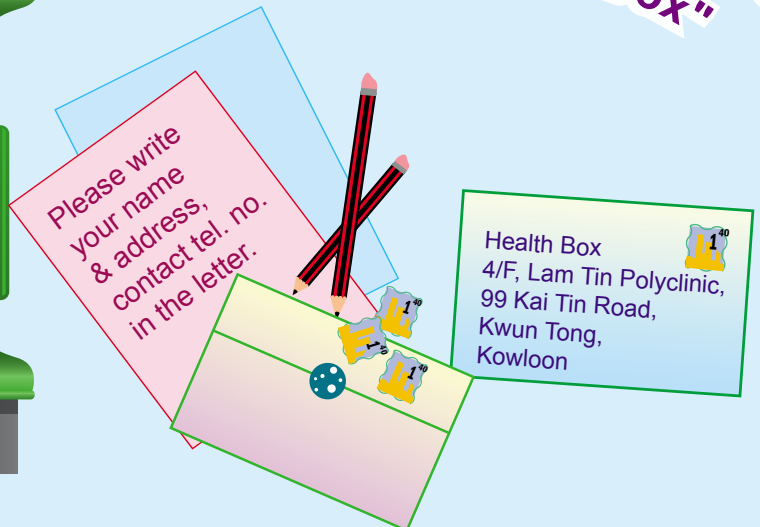
The building blocks of precious friendship are truthful communication, sincerity and love. Although these come from your heart, skills are also needed. Each of us has a set of desirable behaviours or attitudes that people like and another set of inappropriate ones that keep people away. Here are some tips for desirable behaviours and attitudes:

- ✓ Willingness to share, cooperate and help
- ✓ Listen actively, able to start a conversation
- ✓ Tell people something about yourself and respond to questions
- ✓ Express appreciation and friendliness
- ✓ Accept appreciation and respond appropriately
- ✓ Notice the emotion and needs of others
- ✓ Express your feeling and need in an appropriate manner
- ✓ Stay calm and negotiate when there is conflict

Health Tips



For enquiries of student's health problem, please write to "Health Box"



Please write your name & address, contact tel. no. in the letter.

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Kwun Tong,
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