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TEACHING KIDS TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN FAKE FRIENDS AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF REAL FRIENDS

Helping your kids understand the difference between fake friends and real friends is an important life skill. As a parent, you can guide them through this process with the following steps. Teaching your kids about fake and real friendships will empower them to make informed decisions and build meaningful connections throughout their lives.

For more support, take a look at our community resources below or reach out to us at info@aocan.org, or call 519-208-5333.

Community Resources: <https://aocan.org/resources/>

We encourage you to use or share our well researched resource sheets with your networks and organizations but we respectfully request that you honour our copyright and leave our branding intact.



Step 1: Communication is Key

Start an open conversation with your child about friendship. Emphasize the value of healthy relationships and how they positively impact one's life.

Example: "What makes a friend?" "What different types of friends are there?" "Hey, let's have a chat about friends! Just like how we talk about school and hobbies, it's important to talk about what makes a good friend and how to tell if someone is a true friend."

Step 2: Define True Friendship and other terms to explain social interactions

Explain the qualities of a true friend: someone who respects, supports, and cares for them without judgment or jealousy. Highlight the importance of mutual respect and trust. Friends can be found online, clubs or even with different generations. It's helpful when children can learn and accept that friendships can look, feel and sound different.

Example: "A real friend is someone who always supports you, even if you have different opinions. They care about your feelings and treat you kindly. It's like having a buddy who's always there for you."

Step 3: Discuss Warning Signs

Outline the warning signs of fake friends using the provided list. Use real-life examples to help your child understand each sign and its implications.

Example: "Remember when you told me that your friend often says mean things about others behind their backs? That's a warning sign. Real friends don't say hurtful things about others."



Step 4: Encourage Trusting Instincts

Teach your child to trust their gut feelings. If something feels off about a friend, it's important to listen to those instincts and evaluate the situation.

Example: "You know that feeling you get when something doesn't seem right? It's like your inner alarm telling you to be careful. If you ever feel that way about a friend, it's important to pay attention."

Step 5: Role-Playing

Engage in role-playing scenarios where your child can practice recognizing fake friend behaviors and responding appropriately. This can help them build confidence in their ability to assess friendships.

Example: "Let's pretend I'm your friend, and I'm always wanting to use your toys but never share mine. How would you handle that? Practicing these situations can help you know what to do in real life."

Step 6: Analyze Relationships

Encourage your child to assess their current friendships and other relationships using the warning signs. Help them think critically about each friend's behavior and whether it aligns with true friendship or what is tolerated as a friend.

Example: "Think about your friend's actions. Do they cancel plans often and not seem to care about your feelings? It's important to think about whether these behaviors show they're a true friend."



Step 7: Emphasize Self-Worth

Explain that true friends appreciate them for who they are. Reinforce their self-worth and encourage them not to change to please others.

Example: "You should always be yourself around your friends. A real friend likes you for who you are, and you don't have to change to make them like you more."

Step 8: Teach Healthy Boundaries

Discuss the importance of setting boundaries in friendships. Help your child understand that a real friend will respect their boundaries.

Example: "If your friend asks to borrow your things but doesn't return them, it's okay to say no. Real friends respect your belongings and your feelings."

Step 9: Foster Open Communication

Let your child know that they can always talk to you about their friendships. Create a safe space where they can share concerns without fear of judgment.

Example: "Remember, you can always talk to me about your friends. I'm here to listen and help you figure out what's best for you."



Step 10: Encourage Diversity in Friendships

Teach your child to appreciate friendships with people from different backgrounds. This helps them broaden their perspective and recognize genuine connections. Model diverse friendships if possible or model diversity differently (music, books) by engaging in conversations in teachable moments.

Example: "It's great that you have friends from different places! Learning about their cultures and sharing your interests can help you make genuine connections."

Step 11: Share Personal Stories

Share your own experiences with both fake and real friends. This will help your child relate to the lessons and understand that everyone goes through these situations.

Example: "When I was your age, I had a friend who would only talk about themselves. It helped me understand the importance of listening and caring about each other."

Step 12: Building Resilience

Explain that not all friendships will last forever, and that's okay. Teach your child that they deserve friends who treat them well and that they should never settle for less.

Example: "Sometimes, friendships change, and that's okay. It's important to focus on friends who treat you well and make you feel happy."



Step 13: Celebrate Healthy Friendships

Acknowledge and celebrate the positive friendships your child has. This reinforces the value of real friends and encourages them to seek out similar relationships.

Example: "I noticed how you and your friend work together so well on projects. It's clear you value and support each other, which is what real friends do."

Step 14: Be a Role Model

Model healthy friendships in your own life. Your child learns a lot by observing how you interact with your friends.

Example: "Did you see how I helped my friend when they were feeling down? Just like you, I have friends I care about and support."

Step 15: Reiterate Support

Let your child know that you're there to support them in navigating friendships. Be available to provide advice, guidance, and a listening ear whenever they need it. Offer to intervene as an adult if ever needed.

Example: "Remember, I'm here for you. If you ever have questions or concerns about your friends, you can always talk to me."



Recognizing Fake Friends: Signs to Watch For

Navigating friendships can be tricky, and it's essential to be able to identify the warning signs of fake friends. Here are some key indicators to help you distinguish between genuine friends and those who might not have your best interests at heart:

1. Envy and Jealousy

- Example: If you notice your friend acting distant or critical when you achieve something great, it could be a sign of jealousy.

2. Negativity

- Example: If your friend often complains and brings down your mood instead of uplifting you, it's a red flag.

3. Gossiping

- Example: If your friend frequently talks behind others' backs, be cautious – they might do the same to you.

4. Frequent Plan Cancellations

- Example: Your friend regularly cancels plans last minute, making you feel like you're not a priority.

5. Guilt Tripping

- Example: Your friend uses guilt to manipulate you, making you feel bad for things they also do without remorse.

6. One-Upmanship

- Example: Your friend always tries to top your achievements or make themselves seem better in comparison.

7. Inferiority Complex

- Example: Your friend subtly makes you feel inferior to boost their own self-esteem.



8. Passive-Aggressiveness

- Example: Your friend gives you compliments that sound nice but actually have a mean undertone.

9. Drama-Seeking

- Example: Your friend seems to thrive on conflicts and is often at the center of drama.

10. Always Right

- Example: Your friend never admits being wrong and tends to shift blame onto others.

11. Frequent Change of Friends

- Example: Your friend constantly introduces new people as their "best friends," making you question their authenticity.

12. Using You

- Example: Your friend only connects with you when they need something from you, such as favors or connections.

13. Short-Temper

- Example: Your friend becomes angry and lashes out when things don't go their way.

14. Unreliable Support

- Example: Your friend is absent when you need them for emotional support during tough times.

15. Resistance to Your Success

- Example: Your friend discourages you from pursuing your dreams and goals.

16. No Defending

- Example: Your friend doesn't stand up for you or support you when you face challenges.

17. Confidence Erosion

- Example: Your friend frequently makes negative comments that chip away at your self-confidence.

18. Ignoring Gut Feelings

- Example: Your friend dismisses your concerns and instincts, making you doubt yourself.



19. Conversation Monopolization

- Example: Your friend dominates conversations and rarely shows interest in your thoughts or experiences.

20. Caught in Lies

- Example: Your friend frequently gets caught lying and may try to cover it up.

21. Lack of Genuine Apologies

- Example: Your friend rarely apologizes sincerely and might use sarcasm or passive-aggressiveness.

22. Offloading Problems

- Example: Your friend often unloads their issues on you without showing any intention of changing their behavior.

23. Attention Demanding

- Example: Your friend expects you to drop everything for them and disregards your boundaries.

24. One-Sided Relationship

- Example: Your friend focuses solely on their needs, showing little interest in your feelings or needs.

25. Unreliable Commitment

- Example: Your friend frequently makes plans but rarely follows through on them.

26. Breaking Promises

- Example: Your friend makes promises they don't keep, leaving you disappointed.

27. Gossip Seeker

- Example: Your friend always seeks out gossip and sensitive information, often spreading it around.

28. Insincerity

- Example: You can sense your friend's insincerity, even if they try to hide it with a friendly façade.