

## LEARNING TO RELATE TO OTHERS

“The highest priority of a student is to avoid humiliation at all costs.” –Dr. Mel Levine

School is not the only place where your child has to navigate the social scene. Check out these tips to learn how you can support your child’s social success.

- 1.** Recognize your child’s nonverbal attempts to communicate feelings (e.g., facial expressions, sighs, gestures), and encourage him to express those feelings in words.
- 2.** Describe the types of language used in different social situations, and role-play examples of situations. For instance, an interaction with a teacher will look and sound differently than one with a sibling.
- 3.** Locate structured, supervised activities related to your child’s interests (e.g., scouting, art club, intramurals). If your child will be participating without you, alert the adult leader to your child’s specific social weaknesses so that he or she can monitor interactions.
- 4.** Enlist a respected, older friend or neighbor to mentor your child who is struggling socially.
- 5.** Use role-play to help your child learn and practice respect for personal space. For example, he could pretend that he is in different situations (e.g., standing in line, speaking with a teacher) and gauge how far away he should be from other people. Provide your child with plenty of feedback and positive reinforcement for good practice.
- 6.** Offer suggestions for how your child can start a conversation with a classmate or peer. Some children will need explicit directions; other may only require general suggestions (e.g., when working with a partner or group on a task, compliment others on their work or offer to help finish the task).
- 7.** Be a good listener. If your child tells you about a social dilemma, serve as a sounding board. Do not try to fix the problem; rather encourage your child to generate his own solutions to the problem.
- 8.** Debrief appropriate and inappropriate interactions you and your child observe in real life or on television. Brainstorm strategies the person could have used to make the situation more positive.
- 9.** Occasionally, ask your child if he knows anyone who is being bullied at school or in other environments or if he himself is being bullied. Discuss appropriate actions to take when bullying occurs.
- 10.** Help your child enhance his ability to communicate his feelings by developing vocabulary words to label his emotions and thoughts. Encourage your child to make a list of the terms in a notebook or on a poster so that they are easily accessible.