

# Pointers For Parents

## Helping Children Make New Friends

(NAPS)—Whether your child is a social butterfly or a bit more of a wallflower, there are ways to help him feel less anxious about making new friends—and about making friends with children who are different from him. Try these tips:

- **Teach Tolerance**—Be certain your children know that it is OK—and, in fact, a good thing—to be friends with kids who look different from them or who act differently. Explain to children that the world is made up of different types of people and that often, those who are most different from us make the best friends.

- **Put Them At Ease**—Children going somewhere for the first time are often almost as anxious about being in an unfamiliar place as they are about being with people they do not know or who are different than they are. That anxiety can make it more difficult to make friends. There are ways parents can help though. For instance, if your daughter is starting on a new team, take her to check out some practices a few days before she is scheduled to start. That can take some of the fear out of her new situation and help her relax and make friends.

- **Dealing With Differences**—Children may be better at befriending children who are different from them if they see it being done. Perhaps surprisingly, TV may help. For instance, a Cartoon Network series called “Pet Alien” follows a group of quirky aliens that crash-lands in the lighthouse hideaway of 13-year-old Tommy Cadle. Despite their differences, the aliens and Tommy



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become close friends as they help him with his problems and learn about Earth. The show is available on DVD from Fox Home Entertainment. Parents can use it to highlight how people from different backgrounds can learn from one another and be friends.

- **The Role Of Self-Esteem**—If your child has a positive view of himself, chances are it will be easier for him to make friends. Parents can help build up their children’s self-esteem by praising them and by listening to their children when they speak. If a child’s parent doesn’t listen to him talk, why would he think a potential friend would? It’s also important for children to know that other people like them. If a friend of yours makes a positive comment about your child, pass it on to him.

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