

Dear Families,

Have any of your children had any friendship issues at school? Do you remember having any of these challenges when you were at school? Many of us continue with these challenges into our adult lives. Friendship issues seem to be part of being a human being.

Part of my role as the M-HAWC allows me to spend time with the students and teachers and I really love this. I have been into many classrooms over the past few weeks and taught SEL lessons in different grades. *Confidence* and *Friendship* have been some recent topics. Last week I was chuffed to be asked to take a session on *Friendship* with a year three class. Their teacher asked her students what they found challenging regarding friends, making friends and being friendly. She gave the students *Agency* with their learning; the students were listened to and had a say in what they wanted to learn.

Their teacher emailed me and here is what she wrote...

*I've had a little chat to the kids today and explained that you're coming in. I asked for feedback on some things they would like support with regarding friendship. This is what they have said:*

- *Making new friends when you already have a close friend*
- *When you want to play with different people but not hurt others' feelings*
- *When you don't like what your close friends play but you like them.*



I really thought about how I would tackle this. *“How can I help these kids?”* I wondered. I had my ideas and thoughts about what I would do in these three situations, but would my ideas work for them? Then I remembered about the Solution Focused Schools Conference that I attended and presented at last year. I suddenly knew how I would tackle this lesson.

When I arrived in the year three class, I let the kids know that I was here for *them to teach me* about friendship. I informed them that they had the solutions to their challenges. I told them a story about my funny friend Zdravko who lives in Sydney and how we are always laughing like little kids when we phone each other. We read a book about friends. Then we discussed the first challenge: *How do we make new friends when we already have a close friend?* I asked them for their thoughts, ideas and opinions. We had a discussion, and their responses were so insightful and thoughtful. They then went to their tables and recorded their ideas, collaborating with their peers. We did the same for the next two challenges, and again, amazing ideas.

I've noticed that the more we give children the chance to solve their own challenges, the more often they will solve them. I find by listening to them, then asking a range of questions to prompt them will help to get them thinking. Some of the questions could be:

- “How do you think you might tackle this issue?”
- “What could you try first?”
- “What else could you try?”
- “Have you thought about anything else?”
- “What has worked for you before if you have been in a similar situation?”

I am often amazed at what children come up with in response to these questions. You might like to try this at home and listen to your children come up with some amazing solutions to some of the challenges they face.

Thanks for all your continued support,  
Andy McNeilly  
Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

