

Relationships

Definition:

“Relationships are the connections people have with one another and are a significant contributor to positive mental health. The ability to initiate and maintain satisfying relationships leads to greater social competence.”

Peer Support Australia, 2008.

Positive relationships with others are a significant contributor to positive mental health. Maintaining positive relationships with others provides a degree of protection in difficult circumstances. Friends provide added security to try something new and solve difficult problems. More importantly, they are vital to the process of having fun. Friends can share high points and they provide support in difficult times. Strong friendships, regardless of the quantity, are a contributor to building resilience amongst both the young and old.

“Peer relations contribute substantially to both social and cognitive development and to the effectiveness with which we function as adults. Indeed, the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children” (Hartup, 1992).

Friendships formed in the primary school years are significant indicators of adolescent social health. Research suggests the quality rather than the quantity of friendships is the key to good mental health. It is very difficult for students to maintain a large number of close friends and often it involves personal compromise or sacrifice to satisfy so many other interests. However, those students who have a small group of close friends can easily move between friends whilst feeling free to establish new relationships with others.

Keeping Friends

This 8 session module supports young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to maintain friendships and interact with one another in a friendly and positive way. *Keeping Friends* is based on the premise

friendship skills can be learned in a mutually supportive environment.

Keeping Friends provides students with opportunities to develop skills in maintaining positive friendships by learning how to play fairly, accept that friendships change, support each other and acknowledge that they may have a variety of friends.

Keeping Friends focuses on developing the following skills:

- critical thinking
- empathy
- conflict resolution
- assertiveness
- relationship building

Aims of *Keeping Friends*:

- identify qualities of friends
- broaden friendship base
- recognise the importance of friendship
- become more welcoming of others
- engage in positive play



Session Content:

- identify common interests with peer groups
- practise skills of friendship
- recognise a range of different friendship groups to which students belong
- being supportive of friends
- the need for friends
- joining different groups
- saying no respectfully
- playing fairly
- winning modestly and accepting outcomes positively