HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS FROM DAY ONE:
A Caregiver’s Guide To Supporting Young Children
HOW DO CHILDREN LEARN TO DEVELOP SAFE, LOVING, AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?

YOUR CHILD CAN LEARN THE SKILLS THEY NEED to create safe and supportive relationships. This guide will provide you with tools to begin these conversations with your child.

This guide was created as part of our ELEMENTARY PREVENTION INITIATIVE FOR CHILDREN (EPIC), which provides healthy relationship skill-building workshops to K-5 students and the adults in their lives.

Day One uses the pronoun “they” in place of “he” or “she” in order to respect people of all genders reading these guides.

THE 1ST STEP IS TO KNOW: WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

DAY ONE TEACHES CHILDREN THAT A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP IS MADE OF:

- **EQUITY:** you each put a similar amount of effort into the relationship, and no one is trying to control the other person's choices

- **RESPECT:** your interests, identities, and culture are appreciated and taken seriously

- **TRUST:** your feelings and opinions are listened to and each person expects the best of the other

- **COMMUNICATION:** each person has a chance to share how they are feeling and feels heard and respected

- **SAFETY:** you both feel comfortable being yourselves and sharing your feelings without fear of sudden mood changes or aggression

- **BOUNDARIES:** you feel comfortable communicating guidelines for how you want to be treated in the relationship

- **CONSENT:** you feel comfortable setting boundaries about your personal space and privacy, and you can trust that your boundaries will be respected

- **SUPPORT:** each of you encourages the other to do their best and pursue their interests

- **INDEPENDENCE:** you recognize the importance of taking time for yourselves and other relationships away from each other

If you are teaching your child healthy relationship skills, it’s important to model those skills for them in your own relationships.

Call Day One at 800.214.4150 to talk about options, text us at 646.535.DAY1 (3291) or email us at info@dayoneny.org. IT’S FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL.
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP QUIZ
DO YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS WHO...

Ask your child the following questions to start a conversation about healthy relationships.

Continue to do something that bothers you EVEN AFTER you ask them to stop? □ YES □ NO

Try to control who you spend time with and what other friends you have? □ YES □ NO

Spread rumors or secrets about you? □ YES □ NO

Make fun of your interests, family, or friends? □ YES □ NO

Call you unkind names or make you feel badly about yourself? □ YES □ NO

Get so jealous they yell or break your things? □ YES □ NO

Go through your phone or other personal things without your consent? □ YES □ NO

Touch you in ways that make you feel uncomfortable? □ YES □ NO

Threaten to stop being your friend if you don’t do what they say? □ YES □ NO

THEY DESERVE TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS.
YOUR CHILD DESERVES TO FEEL SAFE, SUPPORTED, RESPECTED, AND CARED FOR IN ALL OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS. If they know what a healthy relationship looks and feels like, they can make informed choices about their own relationships.

YOU CAN INTERRUPT NEGATIVE MESSAGES.
WE ARE ALL CONSTANTLY RECEIVING MESSAGES ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS FROM THE WORLD AROUND US. Controlling behavior, name-calling, extreme jealousy, and even physical violence are often portrayed as expected parts of romantic relationships. Challenge ideas like “boys will be boys” that suggest your child’s gender determines their role in a relationship or confuses crossing boundaries with signs of affection. You can ensure your child knows that power and control are not qualities of a healthy relationship.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.
LEARNING TO TREAT OTHERS IN HEALTHY AND RESPECTFUL WAYS TAKES PRACTICE. You can give your child the skills and space to practice setting and respecting boundaries, reflect on their mistakes, and treat others with kindness. Help them practice by teaching them to say things like “Do you want to keep playing this game?” and “I don’t like it when you do that. Please stop now.”

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIPS THEY SEE AROUND THEM.
ASK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS & RELATIONSHIPS.
Show your child it is normal and healthy to talk about their feelings. Encourage them to share their excitement or concern about any of their relationships with you. Try to respond without judgment so your child knows they can always come to you if they have questions or find themselves in an unhealthy relationship.

PAUSE TO CHECK IN.
Whether you are in the middle of having a tickle fight or cuddling with a book, take time to pause and check in to ask if your child is enjoying themselves and wants to continue. This sets an important example and shows your child it is okay to stop an activity to make sure everyone is enjoying themselves.

PRACTICE EMPATHY.
Encourage your child to think about how their actions might affect other people. Prompt your child to read the facial expressions and body language of people around them or of characters in books, TV shows, and movies. You can say: “Based on their face, how do you think they’re feeling?” If your child has hurt someone, say, “It seems like your friend was hurt by what you did, please check in to see if they are okay and how you can make them feel better.”

EMPOWER THEM TO MAKE CHOICES ABOUT THEIR BODY.
Children are often told to hug or kiss family members or other adults in their lives as a sign of love and respect—even when they don’t want to. This can send the message that other people’s feelings are more important than their right to make decisions about their own body. If you notice your child is shy or nervous in these situations, offer them choices: “Do you want to wave or hug goodbye?”

SPEAK WITHOUT SHAME ABOUT BODY PARTS & FUNCTIONS.
When children are taught to feel ashamed about touching or talking about their bodies, they are less likely to speak up if they experience abuse. Encourage your child to ask questions and learn about their body.

SHOW THEM YOU MEAN IT!
Your child pays close attention to what you do and learns lessons from how you interact with them and others. Be honest when you make a mistake. Show them you are practicing too.
This guide was created as part of Day One’s Elementary Prevention Initiative for Children (EPIC), which provides healthy relationship skill-building workshops to K-5 students and the adults who are influential in their lives.

Funding for Day One’s EPIC is provided by the Jerome Chazen Fund to Address Domestic Violence.

Day One helps young people recognize the signs of abusive relationships, so they can make healthier choices from day one of dating. We provide legal and social services, educational workshops and organizing opportunities to youth aged 24 and under who are experiencing intimate partner abuse. If you or someone you know needs help, call us toll free at 800.214.4150, check us out online at www.dayoneny.org, text us at 646.535.DAY1 (3291) or email us at info@dayoneny.org.

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