



Let's think about **friendships**:

A young people's guide

**The
Children's
Society**



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This booklet has been produced by
The Children's Society and the Diocese of Sheffield.

The Children's Society

The Children's Society is a national children's charity that helps children and young people to enjoy safer, happier childhoods.

For the last 15 years, as part of their annual **Good Childhood Report**, The Children's Society's has been listening to what young people have been saying about their well-being, and gathering their views on things that matter to them in their lives. By listening to children in this way, The Children's Society has been able to understand more about what's important to them.

In recent years, The Children's Society has learnt more about the important role friendships play in children's well-being. To understand this better, during Spring 2020 they asked young people aged 8-19 from across the country in schools and youth clubs about friendships. What the young people said was really valuable and important, so The Children's Society created friendship guides to support children's friendships – including guides aimed at older children, parents/carers and this one. We hope it will promote thinking about friendships.

Sheffield Diocese: Introduction by Huw Thomas, Diocesan Director of Education

Friendship can be great, but it can also be a bit complicated. Like all things that matter most, it's a deeply rooted part of who we are, it takes a bit of time and thinking sometimes to figure it out, and isn't always straightforward.

Working with The Children's Society, The Diocese of Sheffield has helped produce this guide. We listened to what young people said about friendship in some of our local primary schools and what they told us was helpful and important. In this friendship booklet you will see some of the things that these young people said (we haven't included their names with their words, so no one can tell who said what).

The Church of England says that 'The ultimate worth of each person is grounded in being created in the image of God and in God's love and compassion for each.'

Or as one of our young people said:

*'I would explain friendship by using the word **love.**'*

Jesus spoke about 'Life in all its fullness.' (Gospel of John 10.10). It's our hope that this booklet will help us to enjoy friendship to the full, by getting us thinking about what makes for a fulfilling friendship. To do that it's important that all children feel listened to and know who they can talk to if they want any support.

How to use this booklet

As you work through this booklet you will find some thoughts from other young people. along with ideas to get you thinking.



There are some things for you to think about,



some activities for you to do,



and some thoughts about friendship from the Christian faith.

We hope it is useful.



Reflection activity: What is a friend?

In this space draw a picture of what you think of when you hear the word **'friend'**. It might be one picture, a few words that spring to mind or a few small doodles. Whatever works for you.



After you have drawn it, you might want to share your 'Friend Square' with someone else and take a look at theirs. Is there anything else you want to add?

Why do we need to think about friendships:

What young people tell us



Are friendships simple?

Do friendships just happen?

Can one person help another with friendships?



From what young people tell us, it is clear that friendships can be great, but also take a bit of work.

They don't just happen.

When The Children's Society spoke to young people, they were honest about the things that are needed to make friends – and to make a good friendship that lasts.

Some young people were very honest and said they didn't know what to say to be helpful. Some young people said that if they are finding it difficult, they ask an adult to help.

'I still don't think that I've managed to figure out what makes some friendships really good and what makes some really bad... You just have to figure it out as you go along.'

'I don't know. I can't keep them myself.'

'I don't think there's a magic formula. It's just how your brains click.'

What makes a good friendship?

'You feel comfortable with a true friend.'

'A good friendship is when they let you play games with them.'

'Friends make you laugh when you feel down.'

'Good friends treat each other with respect.'

What do you think makes a good friendship? 

Why do some friendships work and others don't?

What is the most important thing in a friendship?

'A good friendship is
when you are made to
feel uplifted,
better than you did and
just happy in general.'



Friendship recipe



What would be your recipe for friendship?

Bear in mind you can make a list of the ingredients (e.g. respect, honesty) and also some instructions (e.g. mix together every so often).



One of the most important writers in the Bible, Paul, talks about friendship. He uses the word 'love' to describe very strong friendship. You could read the other words he uses in his 'recipe' by looking them up – see 1 Corinthians 13.4-7.

A good friendship

What makes a friendship a GOOD friendship?

When we spoke to young people, they told us a good friendship is about:

- Making strong connections.
- Laughing together.
- Helping each other out.
- You may disagree but you talk and try to fix things.
- Being thoughtful of each other's feelings, opinions and space.
- Always having someone to talk to – if you look after one another and will never be alone even in the hardest times.
- Friendship is joyful, cheerful and happy.

Truly tricky question

Here's a tricky question:
what helps friendships work?



Here's a trickier question: how do you answer that in just one sentence that starts: 'Friendships work when...'

Listen to what others say in their sentences.

Try different words until you've got your best response to a truly tricky question!



The Church of England uses some special words that describe how we are as people. They are tricky words but we thought you may like to read them as part of your thinking about friendships:

'Our commitment to the dignity and ultimate worth of each person, rooted in each being created in the image of God and loved by God, is further shaped by the person, teaching and example of Jesus.'



**Friendships
aren't simple.**

**They can involve a bit
of time and thinking
to make them work.**

There are different sorts of friendship.

Friendships can go wrong.

**We can learn a lot about friendships
by listening to each other.**

Remember, you can talk to other people about friendships – particularly if they are upsetting you or making you feel unhappy.



Friendship virtues

Our virtues are our best qualities. They are the things that make us good people and good friends.

What young people told us:

'Being kind, helpful and caring makes friendships work.'

'Being trustworthy and dependable makes friendships work.'

'Being open and honest, not hiding anything from them, makes friendships work.'

'Being yourself, show forgiveness and accept people for who they are.'

'Being patient.'

'Being supportive.'

'Being true

to who you are. A true friend will take you for who you are.

Don't try too hard to be friends with someone, show your

true colours

and that will be enough.'



Being friends

Virtues are the qualities we have that make up the best of our character.

If you had to pick two pieces of advice for someone wanting their friendship to be a good one, what would they be? If you would like, add them to the 'B' below.



In the Bible, Paul lists some 'fruits of the Spirit'. These are the qualities or virtues that Paul thinks God would like to grow in people:

'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.' (from Galatians 5.22-23, NRSV)

Communication

What young people told us:

'You need to understand each other.
It does help if you have grown
used to being around each other.'

'Good friends say sorry.'

'Arguing can actually help - it helps
you to solve things that are getting
on your nerves...it helps to clear
the air.'

'You will sometimes argue, but
recognise when you need to say
sorry - you will move past it!

'Everyone isn't perfect.
Own up, apologise, move on.'

So what do you think?



Communication is really important in a friendship. Sometimes we are good at it and sometimes not so good – and sometimes it's hard to know what is good communication and what isn't. Look at these questions and think how you'd answer them:

Is arguing a good thing?

Does it just clear the air and help us stay friends? Or is it a sign friendship is going to end?

Do people have to talk a lot to each other to be friends, or can they have just as good a friendship without talking that much?

How many times should you accept a 'sorry'?

If someone keeps on upsetting you, is it time to end the friendship?

Can you always talk things through and work things out, or **are there times when friendships have to end?**



In the Bible, in the Gospels, Jesus and his friends debated all the time! There are two examples of this in Mark's Gospel. The first one is where he has a big fall out with people who are misusing God's special temple. You can read more about this in the Bible, Mark 11: 15-17.

You can then find Jesus getting on well with someone when they discuss things and agree on them in Mark 12: 28-34.

How do we get on with each other?

What young people told us:

'Show respect
and patience.'

'Friends do not
judge you, they
support you.'

'You need a
friend to guide
you like a
guardian angel.'

'Friends never
make you feel
uncomfortable.'

'I can't keep them
[friends] myself.'

'A good
friendship is
when you are
accepted for
who you are.'

'It differs from
person to person,
but as long as
you care and
have their best
interests at
heart. Different
people show it in
different ways.'

'My best friends are the
people who I can

talk about

anything

with. They know when
I am happy or sad and they
try to help me feel better.'

What about giving advice or telling each other what you think? Do we just accept our friends as they are, or do we try to change them?



If our friends is doing something we think they shouldn't, should we tell them? What do you think?

Friendship struggles

'Dear Reader,

I just wanted to say I really struggle to make friends. I don't feel like I have any. It's sad and horrible and I feel lonely. Is there anything you can do?

From

Me'

What could you and other people you know do to help someone like Me?

How can we have good quality friendships?



It's really important that we're comfortable with our friendships. Sometimes we might want to also look out for those who are left out and excluded. Jesus had a reputation for making friends with people who other people thought you should not be friends with. For example, tax collectors were hated by the people of Jesus' time because they sided with the Romans, who were the enemy. But there is a great story of Jesus befriending a tax collector. You can read about it in the Gospel of Luke 19: 1 -10.



When friendships go wrong

What young people told us:

'Friendships sometimes go wrong as maybe people ignore each other or leave them alone or simply there is a misunderstanding.'

'Sometimes friendship goes wrong as the friends might not listen to each other and they start to get angry at each other so they start making problems.'

'If you want to fix a friendship you should try to say sorry and show you care.'

'If friendship goes wrong you should forgive each other because you will get over it.'

'You could try to calm down and a few days later apologise and try to make up by doing something together or making something for them.'

'We can apologise and act kindly more than you always do, and also never get angry when they are too.'

'Think what you have done wrong and write them a message or talk to them.'

'The best thing about friendship is you can forgive and get rid of the past and have fun in the future.'

Friendships can go wrong when we:

Fall out
with each
other

Upset
each
other

Feel
jealous

Here are some things for good friends to do when friendships are not going well:

- Talk to each other, finding time to listen.
- Tell each other how we feel.
- Listen carefully to each other's feelings.
- Stay quiet for a while, so the other person gets to talk.
- Try to imagine how the other person is seeing things, and how they are feeling.
- Try to agree on one or two ways we could make things better.
- Talk to an adult you trust about it and get their advice.

Good friendships are precious. Try not to give up on them.

Think of some things you would say to a friend if you thought your friendship wasn't working and, if you would like to, write them in the box.



In Matthew 7:3-4, Jesus said this really strange thing about people worrying about a speck of wood in someone else's eye, when they didn't notice they had a big log in their own. Have a read and have a think about his words: 'Why, then, do you keep on looking at the little bit of wood your friend's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? How can you say to your friend, "Please, let me take that little bit of wood out of your eye" when you have a log in your own eye?'

What do you think Jesus meant by this?

Friendships in our lives

What young people told us:

'A good friendship is when you can rely on others.'

'Friends are always there for you when you need them, in bad and good times.'

'You hang out with each other and stick together.'

'You give each other space when you need it.'

'Good friends are there for you all the time. Even when you sometimes disagree with each other you know that you can always trust them.'

'It's quite easy to make friends but not easy to stay friends all the time. You have to learn that you can't always do what you want to do, sometimes you have to compromise.'

Friendships line

Take a strip of paper about as long and thin as your arm and fold it lengthways once, twice, three times and a fourth.



Now unfold it.

Imagine this is your life up to now.

Plot along this line the story of friendship for you.

- When have you made friends?
- When have new friends come along?
- Has anyone ever drifted or moved away?
- Have you changed schools or classes or moved house?
- Have there been times when you have missed seeing a friend as much?
- What do you remember about friendships when you were very young?

You may want to show others your friendship line, or you may want to keep it to yourself.



In the New Testament, the writer John talks about us being God's children and growing to be what God made us to be:

'Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.' (1 John 3.2, NRSV)

As you map out your life of friendship, be thankful for who you are and hopeful for who you are yet to be and yet to meet. Exciting stuff!

Who can help?

Struggling with friendships is normal, however if you are worried it is important to ask for help. This could be help from someone in school, or from another adult that you trust. You can also contact Childline for free by calling **0800 1111** or by visiting their website **childline.org.uk**

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The Children's Society fights for the hope and happiness of young people when it is threatened by abuse, exploitation and neglect. We take inspiration from the courage and hope we see in young people every day. It fuels our belief that a good childhood is something every young person deserves.

We fight for hope by understanding the needs of young people and supporting them through their challenges. We also campaign tirelessly for the big social changes that will transform the well-being of young people, and strive to improve the lives of those who need hope most.

Driven by hope and working alongside young people and supporters, we will not rest until together we've created a society built for all children.