

Peer Relationships

This book is about friendship between a child with autism and a typically developing child. It shows how children can respect and appreciate their differences.

CORE SKILL OBJECTIVES	INTENTIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES	
RELATE 	Children will:	Teachers will:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in and maintain positive interactions and relationships with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge positive peer interactions

TEACHING TIP

Children with autism need extra support to show awareness of their peers, to demonstrate a desire to play near or with others, and to communicate their needs to other children. Typically developing children need extra help respecting differences in the play and social communication of children with autism or other disabilities. One way you can do this is by explicitly teaching social skills using books that demonstrate positive social behaviors (e.g., acts of kindness, respecting others) of children with and without disabilities. Discussions like this can help support all children’s positive interactions with one another and strengthen peer relationships.

1. INTRODUCE

- “Do you like to high five, hug, or wave to friends when you see them in the morning? We can still be friends even if we like different things. Today we’re going to read a story, *Benny Doesn’t Like to Be Hugged*. It’s about friends who show kindness even when they like different things.”

2. READ THE BOOK

- Pause occasionally to label and describe character’s positive social interactions.
- Encourage children to describe why/how these are positive peer interactions. Acknowledge and affirm responses.

Acknowledge Positive Peer Interactions 		
<p>Read: “But Benny doesn’t like to be hugged.”</p> <p>Label: “Benny’s friend has his arms open and ready for a hug. But Benny looks worried.”</p> <p>Consider: “Should Benny’s friend hug him? How else can his friend greet him?”</p> <p>Acknowledge: “You shared great ideas for ways Benny’s friend can greet him respectfully, or kindly, without a hug.”</p>	<p>Read: “And he can act fussy every once in a while.”</p> <p>Label: “Benny is crying and pointing to a block.”</p> <p>Consider: “Should she hug Benny? How can his friend be kind to Benny?”</p> <p>Acknowledge: “I agree. Benny wants the block. His friend shouldn’t hug him because he doesn’t like to be hugged. She can be kind by helping him find the block he needs.”</p>	<p>Read: “...I don’t give it a second thought.”</p> <p>Label: “They’re eating lunch together.” Benny’s food is neat on his plate and his friend’s food is all mixed up.”</p> <p>Consider: “What are some ways you are different from your friends?”</p> <p>Acknowledge: “Benny’s friend is kind, even though they like things different ways. It’s okay for friends to be different.”</p>

3. REVIEW

- “Benny’s friends showed respect and kindness when he liked certain things but not others. Everyone was able to be themselves and have fun with their friends at school.”

4. KEEP IT GOING

- Focus children’s attention on positive peer interactions. Encourage children to respect each other’s differences and highlight children when they are kind and inclusive during play (e.g., “I saw you wait for (Peer) to catch up before you started the game. That was kind!”). Remember that positive peer interactions can be more than a physical act – they can be words of encouragement, offering a solution to a problem, or offering to help others.