

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF FRIENDSHIP

Stage One: Before Age of 3 years

1. Mostly interact and play with members of their own family.
2. Parallel play is still present (playing alongside rather than playing with).
3. Focus on eliciting attention from adults (peers may be rivals with regards to this).
4. Children to have preferred companions at this age



Stage Two: During Pre-School years (Ages 3-6)

1. Change from playing alongside someone to playing with them.
2. They learn that some games and activities cannot happen unless there is an element of sharing and turn-taking.
3. Conceptualisation of friendship is still functional and egocentric (when asked why a particular child is their friend, they'll say, "because they live next door", or "they have toys I like.")
4. Friendships are transitory
5. They require alternative means of dealing with conflict, become less egocentric and possessive of equipment.
6. The most popular children are those who make positive initiatives such as, "let's go and play with..." and clearly welcome the company of others and include them in their play.



Stage Three: Ages 6 to 9 years

Children start to understand:

1. There is an element of reciprocity needed in order to maintain friendships.
2. Friends fulfil practical needs, are helpful and can be relied upon for assistance.
3. Recognition that friends may or may not share similar interests.
4. Friends lend you items you need.
5. Simple aspects of the other person's personality become important.
6. Children regarded well by their peers are those who are friendly or complementary.



7. Awareness of impact of their actions/comments on another's physical or emotional state.
8. Recognition of when to tell a 'white lie', or when not to say something.
9. Development of the concept of a 'best friend'.

Stage Four: Pre-Adolescence (Ages 9-13)

1. Clear gender split with friendship based on similarity, shared exploration, emotional support and increasing awareness of how they might be viewed by others.
2. Need opportunity to meet people with shared interests and abilities.
3. Learn the importance of self-disclosure and listening.
4. Mutual sharing of experiences rather than toys.
5. Recognise the thoughts and feelings of others.
6. Power of the peer group becomes greater than power of friends.
7. Development of more effective conflict resolution/ interpersonal skills.



Stage Five: Adolescence (13 years to adult)

1. Friendships are based on trust.
2. Friend differentiation – different friends for different purposes.
3. Higher levels of self-disclosure.
4. Greater emphasis on mutual or admired aspects of the personality.
5. Movement from friendship pairs to groups with shared values.
6. Friends provide a sense of personal identity
7. More abstract definitions of friendship (e.g., "A friend accepts me for who I am.")
8. More time spent with friends rather than family

References:

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Roffey, S., Tarrant, T., & Majors, K. (1994). *Young Friends*, London: Cassell.