**PART 5: SUPPORTING FRIENDSHIP SKILLS**

**What do we need to build our friendship skills?**

* **Self esteem**, an understanding of our interests strengths and weaknesses
* An ability to read some **non verbal signals**….how we say it says more than what we say …e.g. when it is time to stop, are we too close, have we talked about space for long enough?
* Basic **conversational skills:** listen, take turns, stay on topic
* **Emotions vocabulary**

**Levels of Friendship**

* There are distinct stages to developing friendships

**Level 1:** Approximately 3 to 6 years –

* Understands basic need to take turns
* Your friend (in that moment) is the person who gives you things or someone you play with because they are around or sharing your materials.
* Friendship is based on proximity and physical attributes and when asked *Why is \_\_\_\_\_ your friend?* The typical response is *He lives next door*!

**Supporting Level 1**

* *Provide an Opportunity* - Being somewhere where kids can be together and play
* Having materials they may be likely to share
* Practice ‘Would you like to play with….’, and point out what others are doing.
* Keep the time short. Mediate and join in if required (but then ‘step back’ to let them keep going on their own), model sharing and taking turns
* Set up turn taking protocols or ‘joint-working’ activities – e.g. Child has put the lego tower together, your turn to build the wall

**Level 2:** Approximately 6 to 9 years –

* There is an increasing understanding of the idea of mutual interest.
* There is also a new awareness of the motives, thoughts and feelings of others.
* When asked ‘*Why is \_\_\_\_\_ your friend’*, the typical response is ‘*He lets me play the games I want to’, ‘Because she comes to my party and I go to hers’ or ‘She's nice to me’*.
* The likes and dislikes of the other person are more likely to be considered.
* Friendship based on how closely each friend matches their self-interest, for example, in liking similar games.

**Supporting level 2**

* Discuss who likes which interest. Who to approach to play that game.
* Teach how to ask someone to play, and, how to make a comment on what others are doing which may start as interaction
* Encourage your child to act on another person’s instructions, or to take it in turns to decide what to do next, e.g. where to look for the next bug.
* Continue to help with listening as well as talking. You may need to say, ‘X’s turn to talk now’
* Develop the idea of asking for help, or asking for something that another person has
* Share a job, e.g. When laying the table, ‘child X’ does knives and forks and ‘child Y’ does the plates, or one child has half the puzzle pieces and the child as the rest in order to complete it.

Adapted from “Understanding and Teaching Friendship skills”, [www.tonyattwood.com.au](http://www.tonyattwood.com.au), retrieved August 2014