



What
children
teach us about
making
friends

Relocating can be one of the most exhilarating and exciting times in your life; but it can also be one of the loneliest. You've left behind a whole network of friends, family, acquaintances, contacts and colleagues; and the prospect of starting from scratch can be overwhelming.

As long as you're prepared to make the effort to get out, there are plenty of clubs, classes and associations, including FOCUS, one can join to meet new people after relocating, especially in a vibrant city like London. The hard part is figuring out how to turn the strangers you meet into friends.

Children make it look so easy. They can run into any playground and within minutes find a friend, bonding instantly over a shared love of swings or merry-go-rounds. So what can these miniature 'masters of kinship' teach expatriates when faced with the challenge of making new friends?

1) No expectation or agenda

Children won't evaluate the worth of another child before befriending them. Nor do they have high expectations about a potential friendship. They are

quite happy just to spend time in the company of another human being seeing it as a happy bonus if a long-term friendship forms.

2) Unprejudiced

Children do not tend to pre-judge and are wonderfully open-minded when it comes to spotting a potential kindred spirit. Age, accent or where someone lives are unimportant to them, although amusingly, they will often make blunt observations about their differences – "you're old" or "you're tall" which, thankfully, is something we all tend to grow out of.

3) Shared interests

A child will play with another child simply because they both love building castles in the sandpit. Their friendships are built on the solid foundation of shared interests and passions.

4) Curiosity

Children are highly curious and will effectively treat every person they meet like a book. They ask lots of questions in order to hear the story. Their questions create an easy dialogue, which helps to build rapport.

5) Self-disclosure

Children share things about themselves freely and fearlessly. Their lack of insecurities allows them to reveal their true self to others, which quickly builds trust and strengthens a bond.

Sadly, as adults it can be quite a challenge to break down barriers and build up a rapport with new people but next time you find yourself in front of a would-be friend, channel your inner five year-old. Keep your expectations low, try not to pre-judge, ask questions until you find something in common, show some vulnerability and you may just find that making friends really is, child's play.

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