

## **Friendships**

*This pamphlet has been produced by Clyst Vale Community College Counselling Service. This is not intended to be a definitive guide, but does hope to provide information to help young people understand friendships.*

Friendship means a lot to us all, no matter how old we are. A good set of friends can keep us entertained, help us through bad times, help us develop social skills and allow us to lead more fulfilling lives. But it's not always easy making and keeping good friends, and sometimes we make bad choices when we decide who our friends will be.

### **Making new friends**

Often making new friends can be a scary process. Will they like us? Will they make fun of us? Will they treat us well? At the early stage of a friendship, we really can't tell.

Making new friends means we need to be brave and get involved in activities that will allow us to mix with new people. Some ideas might be to join a club, take up a sport, play a musical instrument in a band or group, join a choir, go out to parties etc. Generally we will need to be active, we tend not to make friends if we just sit in our room.

One difficulty we need to overcome, which can be very hard for some people, is dealing with shyness.

### **Dealing with shyness**

Sadly, there is no medicine we can take to cure our shyness. But people who are shy can learn to overcome it. It can take a bit of effort, but it's very well worth doing! The counsellors can help; make an appointment to see us.

### **Difficulties with friendships**

Almost everyone gets into difficulties with friends now and again, whether you are a young person or an adult! Often the problem can be sorted with a little help, perhaps from the counsellors (we are happy to work with a group of friends), or a teacher.

### **Queen Bee**

One difficulty girls may encounter is the 'Queen Bee' syndrome.

Perhaps you have a group of friends where one of you is the 'leader', the one with the greatest influence over the group. This leader may be a good leader or a bad leader; regardless, they seem to have the power in the group. What can happen here is the leader runs things the way she wants and does not tolerate friends who challenge her position. She might react by spreading gossip about one of her group who challenges her authority, or even turning members of the group against that person.

Because she has so much power, the other group members may be afraid to upset her, so they go along with all her preferences to avoid being made the target of her bullying.

If you recognise this pattern come and speak with the counsellors.

## **Broken Wing**

This is a way of encouraging sympathy from others. A person who needs a lot of sympathy may play on your good will to provide them with kind words and affection a lot of the time. They may not be willing to give the same amount of sympathy back to you when you need it.

Also, have a think, do you 'collect' lots of friends who have broken wings? If you do this it might indicate you have a need to be needed! This is not a bad thing, but such friends often find it annoying or difficult to return sympathy and understanding when you need it. It may also indicate you have a low self esteem – come and see one of the counsellors for some help.

## **Numbers**

Some people prefer just a few friends, but the friendships are deep and meaningful. Other people prefer lots of friends, and don't really need them to be that deep. There is no right or wrong here, just personal preference.

## **Games people play**

As with the Queen Bee and Broken Wing pattern described above, it's clear that when you involve yourself with someone else it might lead to games being played out within the friendship. People do this all the time. The games they play are often a reflection of other patterns in their life, usually formed within their family, to meet their needs, or plug holes in their emotions. Games are often destructive. The best way to stop a game is to identify it, name it and confront your friend. The counsellors can help you do this.

## **Weighing up friendships**

Friendships usually come in two types: constructive and destructive.

Constructive friendships make you feel good. They help you to develop, are usually supportive and help you attain your full potential.

Destructive friendships often leave you feeling bad or upset. Destructive friendships often restrict you, or make you feel trapped.

## **Letting go**

This can be a very painful experience. Sometimes we need to take a good long hard look at our friendships and consider breaking friendships that are not doing us any good.

Perhaps we've fallen in with a bad crowd, one that is changing our behaviour, thoughts or attitudes for the worse. Or we may find certain friends too draining. We need to choose friends carefully to keep ourselves in good shape. So, deciding to no longer be friends with a person is something we all need to keep in mind.

Do come and see one of the counsellors if you want to chat about your friendships.

## **What makes a good friend?**

What qualities do you look for in a friend? Trustworthiness, loyalty, a good sense of humour, fairness and fun might appear on anyone's list of qualities they look for.

If you are having trouble making or keeping friends why not make a list of qualities you look for in a friend and ask yourself how many things on that list you can offer to others?