

Book Review*

Title: Good Friends Are Hard To Find

Author: Fred Frankel, Ph.D.

Publisher: Perspective Publishing Inc., 2528 Sleepy Hollow Drive, Suite A, Glendale, CA 91206. 1996.

Cost: \$16.95 ISBN: 0-9622036-7-X

Review By: Roxanne Rae LCSW, BCD

For parents who are willing to take the time to teach their children the art of making good friendships, Dr. Frankel's book, *Good Friends Are Hard to Find* is a jewel. It is based on research at the UCLA Social Skills Training Program that helps children make friends. It is focused on 5-12 year olds. In the author's opinion, his most important research finding is "that one to one play dates are the best way to build close friendships." (p.3). It is important to note that team or group activities do not improve friendships by themselves.

Dr. Frankel's book is extremely well organized with major sections on finding, making and keeping friends. There are sections on meanness and teasing as well as assistance for children with other problems, including ADHD or an existing bad reputation. Each chapter is subdivided and there are many summary charts for quick referencing once one has read the section. There are very specific and clear directions to assist adults in helping children create better friendships. This book's useful tone shows parents how they can talk with and support their children in developing new skills without taking over the task for them.

As parents and children are so busy these days, Dr. Frankel provides an excellent framework for assessing schedules, and deciding whether or not the current activities are providing friends or just filling up free time. He has charts and lists to assist parents in choosing what activities to keep or drop. The author also provides a method to deal with a child's excessive interest in an activity that excludes friends, such as television or video games.

Dr. Frankel's methods require parental commitment to provide the appropriate environment and support to help children develop close companions. This may include the blocking of sibling interruption on a play date or the requirement that only good interactive toys be used. The author also encourages parents to play with their children stating, "Studies show that the self-esteem of boys and girls is higher when their dads play with them regularly." (p.26).

This book offers many easy to read, detailed examples for parents to follow on topic such as encouraging good choices and discouraging bad ones, and being a good host and a good sport. Dr. Frankel also includes a section on "Working with adults who have trouble with your child."

This volume is particularly useful to recommend to parents who have separated or divorced. Often one parent is just learning the skill of supporting their child's social life. Although directed toward parents, Dr. Frankel's book would be useful to school personnel, students and interns of social work, as well as those practitioners who may find themselves working with school-aged children for the first time.

Good Friends Are Hard to Find is a book that provides concrete help, and supports the life-long richness that friendships can bring to a child's life. Despite our busy lifestyles, helping children develop authentic friendships is certainly a task worth fostering.

*Published in California Society for Clinical Social, Work *Clinical Update*, Vol. XXXI, No.11 (June 2001), pp. 7,10.

See *Commentary: Children and the Art of Friendship*, this website.