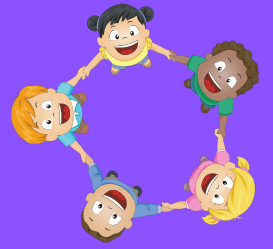


HOW DO CHILDREN CHOOSE A BEST FRIEND?



Traditionally we've thought of friendship as culture. But it's deeper than that and more fundamental.



Health benefits

According to a **2010 review of 148 studies**, strong friendships provide greater health benefits than quitting smoking, losing weight or doing exercise

Having a close group of friends and strong family ties reduces people's mortality risk by **50%**

Children who have a best friend tend to experience **less loneliness** and **depression** and **greater self-worth**.

Having close, supportive friends can help children from low-income backgrounds cope better with difficult circumstances.

Their best friendships seemed to be associated with having better coping skills and a better sense of being able to change things about their lives

Making friends

Mortality risk by **50%**



Cultural differences

Ashaninka society:

- Children only start forming friendships outside their extended family when they hit puberty and seek trading relationships and marriage partners

Russian society:

- Russians view friendship as a more intimate bond, rooted in trust and closeness
- The Russian model is one of fewer friends, but very deep, intense relationships

Canadian society:

- The Canadian model places greater emphasis on respecting people's independence and fewer expectations on close friends



Russian friend: *a droog*

English friend: *pal*

Many children (and adults) form friendships through shared interests

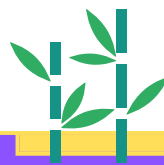
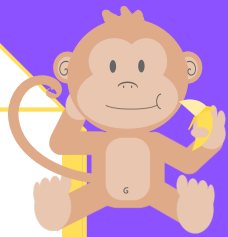
Examples of developing friendships in animal world



Just like humans, dolphins form friendships through shared interests. Male dolphins that forage in deep waters for food, a practice known as "sponging", mainly interact with other male spongers, according to a 2019 study. These strong bonds can last for decades and are critical to each male's mating success



Baboons also form strong relationships to help them overcome early-life adversity, research shows. One 2003 study, led by primatologist Jeanne Altmann of Princeton University, found that friendships among female adult baboons increased the survival rate of their infants. Another study concluded that baboons with strong social bonds experience lower stress and that females work to establish new relationships when a close friend is killed by predators



Whether it's a playground friend, an Ashaninka-style close cousin, a Russian-style droog, or a fellow dolphin with a taste for deep-water hunting, having a friend and ally in life can clearly make a huge difference. For some, that bond starts in childhood. For others, it may take more time.

