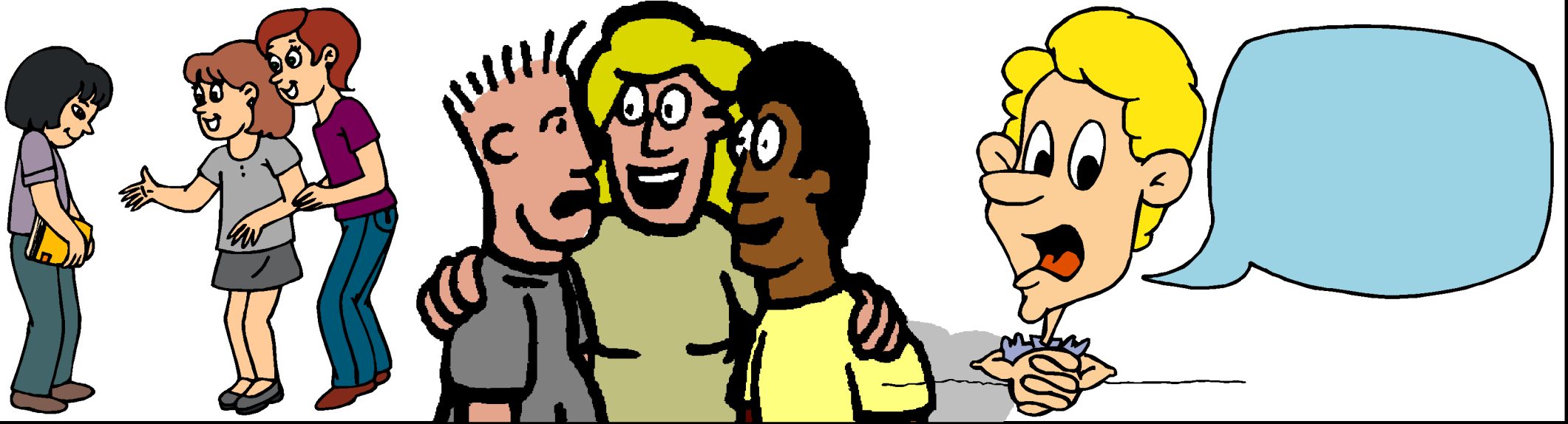


Developing Social Skills



Basic Social Skills

These are the simple skills involved in talking to and interacting with others. They include:

Making frequent eye contact

Smiling when greeting people and talking

Showing "confident" body language: an open, direct stance, not fidgeting or twisting.

Basic politeness: saying please and thank-you, saying hello and good-bye, etc.

Showing interest in others, e.g., asking how their day was, how they thought they went on an exam, etc.

Making Conversation

These are the skills you use when talking to other people. They include:

Taking turns when talking

Listening and showing interest in what the other person has to say

"Small talk": being able to chat about unimportant things

Nodding and smiling to indicate that you are following along

Using humour

Knowing when to disclose personal information and when not to

Building and Maintaining Friendships

There are many skills involved in making and sustaining friendships. For example:

Approach skills: being able to go up and start talking to someone who you don't know or don't know well.

Sharing decision making, i.e., not always insisting on having one's way but negotiating about what to do, where to go, etc.

Showing appropriate affection and appreciation.

Building and Maintaining Friendships

Maintaining contact, i.e., not expecting the other person to "do all the work" of keeping up the friendship.

Being supportive, i.e., showing concern when your friend is having a hard time.

Allowing distance and closeness. People need time apart as well as together.

Thoughtfulness: "thinking ahead" about what might be a nice thing to do for your friend.

Empathy

Empathy is responding in an understanding and caring way to what others are feeling. Empathic skills include:

Noticing other people's feelings.

Expressing concern at others' distress.

Being able to recognise what someone else might be feeling in a given situation.

Showing sensitivity to others' feelings when communicating. For example, being tactful when making critical comments (when criticism is necessary and/or appropriate).

Dealing with Conflict

Social interactions do not always run smoothly.
Conflict resolution skills include:

Assertiveness, or being able to say what you are feeling without being aggressive or getting personal.

Negotiation skills: being able to discuss a conflict calmly and rationally and come to an agreement about a solution.