

## **[www.autismhelp.info](http://www.autismhelp.info)**

### **Buddies**

#### **Points to note**

- Many children with autism will have difficulty forming friendships due to their poor language and social skills. If they do develop friendships, they may quickly burn out their friends by being too demanding, or being unintentionally rude and inconsiderate.
- Children with autism are likely to become frustrated and upset by their inability to make friends and their difficulty interpreting social situations.
- If children with autism are not given support and encouragement to make friends they are denied the very context in which they can practice and develop their communication and social interaction skills.

#### **What you can do**

- Choose a socially mature child in the class to be a buddy to the child with autism. Young girls are often more mature than boys and may be more accepting and nurturing toward a child who appears different and socially awkward. Buddies need to be taught when to ask for adult help and what their role will be.
- A buddy can help explain the rules of games, encourage social interaction, come to the child's aid if he is teased and seek adult help if the child becomes distressed.
- Establish a safe place for the child with autism to retreat to if he is upset. This should be a place that the child knows and can easily get to, and where there is an adult who can quickly offer assistance. If the child has no friends with which to share his fears, concerns etc. he will need a sympathetic adult, such as a school counsellor to talk to.

*Note:*

*Be careful not to place too much stress on the buddy; children with autism can be very demanding. Ideally, have two or three helpers, rotating them on a regular basis.*