

PARENTS' GUIDE TO



Zippy's Friends

Teaching coping and social skills



www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk

You can read much more about *Zippy's Friends* on our website. This Parents' Guide to the programme is available in many different languages and can be downloaded free of charge. You will find other information and resources on the website, to help your child cope with difficult issues such as bereavement, bullying, separation, change and loss. You can also become a *Friend* and be kept informed about our work.

Good health

We pay a lot of attention to our children's physical health - making sure that they eat well, wrapping them up warm in winter, encouraging them to play sports and keep fit.

But do we pay enough attention to their emotional health and wellbeing - how they feel about themselves, how they get on with other children, how well they deal with difficulties and disappointments?

Emotional health is crucial to our happiness and how we get on in life, and even very young children can learn different ways of doing things, to help them in their relationships with other people and in dealing with difficulties.

This booklet introduces a programme called *Zippy's Friends*, which has been designed specially to help five to seven year old children develop those skills at school. It tells you what your child will learn during the programme and how you can help your son or daughter to get the most out of it.



'If we can teach young children how to cope with difficulties, they should be better able to handle problems and crises in adolescence and adult life.'

- Paul Rubenstein, former Chair, Partnership for Children



Dealing with tough times

All of us - adults and children - experience problems and difficulties in life.

'I find that many parents are surprised to discover that children can be taught how to cope with difficulties, but at this age they soak things up like a sponge and evaluation has proved that the programme really does help them.'

- Caroline Egar, Programme Director, Zippy's Friends

As adults, we have arguments and disagreements. We feel unhappy or insecure at work. A relationship ends in tears. A family member dies. We often find it hard to say what we really feel. If we can find effective ways of coping with difficulties and disappointments, we feel better. And research has shown that the more solutions we can think of and use when faced with a problem, the more likely we are to cope with it successfully.

Children, too, experience all sorts of difficulties. Everyday incidents such as a quarrel in the playground, or feeling jealous of a brother or sister. Or bigger problems - changing schools, being bullied, family break-up. But the key for children is the same as for adults. The more ways of coping they have to choose from and can use, the better their chance of being able to deal with a problem successfully.

Experience has shown that children as young as five and six can understand the idea of choosing how to handle a situation, and can learn new ways of coping with difficulties. If they can do this in the first years of primary school, they will acquire skills that should help them for the rest of their lives.



Academic achievement

Research has shown that doing well academically has little effect on a child's ability to cope positively with life's frustrations and challenges, to exercise self-discipline, to make strong and lasting relationships and to live a happy, fulfilled life.

So, while academic achievements are important, it's essential to promote children's emotional wellbeing too.

That is why children benefit from *Zippy's Friends* - they learn skills that will help them to deal with everyday difficulties and to live more happily.

'I have now realized that young children have just the same need to talk about their feelings and problems as grown up people.' - Teacher

There is evidence to show that in schools where children feel better about themselves and each other, they learn better and academic results improve.

'77% of teachers said that the programme had a positive effect on the children's academic achievement.'

- Evaluation Report



What is Zippy's Friends?

Zippy's Friends is a programme for young children of all abilities. It does not focus on children with particular problems or difficulties. Instead, it promotes the emotional health of all young children. It is taught in schools and kindergartens and runs for 24 sessions. Your child's teacher has been specially trained to teach it.

Zippy's Friends has six modules and each module has its own story. You will be hearing a lot about a character called Zippy! He's a stick insect and his friends are a group of boys and girls. The stories show them facing issues that are familiar to young children - friendship, making and losing friends, bullying, dealing with change and loss, and making a new start. Each story is illustrated by a set of brightly coloured pictures and supported by activities such as drawing, role play and playing games. The whole programme has been designed specifically for five to seven year olds and experience has shown that children enjoy it very much.

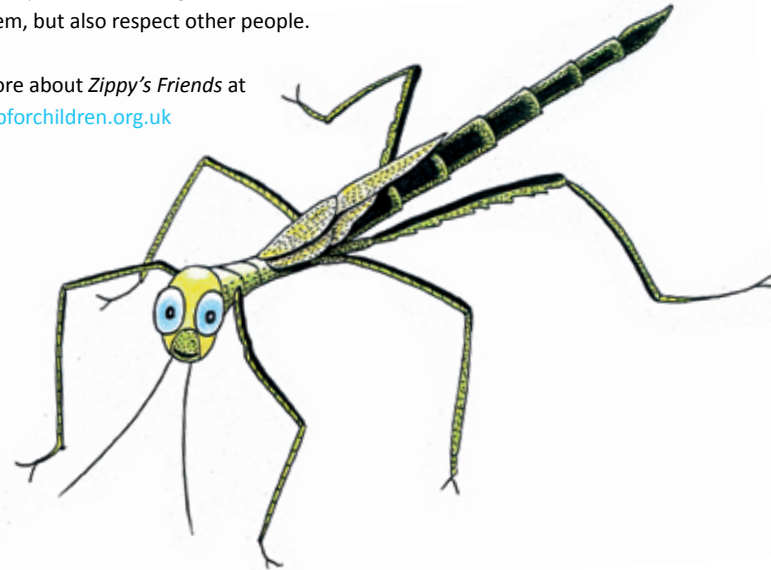


The programme teaches children:

- How to identify and talk about their feelings
- How to say what they want to say
- How to listen attentively
- How to ask for help
- How to make and keep friends
- How to deal with loneliness and rejection
- How to say sorry
- How to cope with bullying
- How to resolve conflicts
- How to deal with change and loss, including death
- How to adapt to new situations
- How to help others

Zippy's Friends does not tell children what to do. Instead, it encourages them to think for themselves and to come up with their own solutions to problems. Children practise choosing solutions that not only help them, but also respect other people.

You can learn more about *Zippy's Friends* at www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk



A closer look

***Zippy's Friends* is divided into six modules of four sessions each. Each module has a different topic. We summarise them here, so that you can see what your child will be learning.**

MODULE 1

FEELINGS

The children start by discussing feelings - sad, happy, angry, jealous and nervous. They practise saying how they feel in different situations and explore ways to make themselves feel better.

MODULE 2

COMMUNICATION

This module teaches children how to communicate effectively. The programme teaches children to listen to others. It teaches them how to ask for help and to say what they want to say, even in difficult situations. Quiet children often 'open up' in these sessions and learn to express themselves more freely.

MODULE 3

MAKING AND BREAKING RELATIONSHIPS

Here the children learn about friendship - how to make and keep friends, and how to deal with loneliness and rejection. They practise how to say sorry and how to make up with a friend after a quarrel.

MODULE 4

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This module deals with how to resolve conflicts, and teachers comment that children quickly become much better at settling their differences. In particular, this module deals with the problem of bullying and what children can do if they or others are bullied.

MODULE 5

DEALING WITH CHANGE AND LOSS

This module looks at coping with changes, both big and small. The biggest change of all is when someone dies. Although adults often find death a very difficult subject to talk about, young children rarely do. They welcome the chance to talk openly about a topic that has become taboo for many adults. One session is spent visiting a graveyard or cemetery and, perhaps surprisingly, this is often rated the most popular session of the whole programme.

MODULE 6

WE COPE

The final module affirms all that the children have learnt - finding different ways to cope, helping others, and adapting to new situations. The final session is a celebration, with each child receiving a crown and a certificate.



Does it work?

Yes. Evaluation studies in different countries and cultures have consistently found that *Zippy's Friends* helps children to improve their coping and social skills.

These independent studies, which include large randomized control trials, have shown that children develop:

- Improved coping skills
- Greater self-awareness
- More empathy
- Better self-regulation
- Improved relationships
- Improved academic achievement

Studies have also found that the classroom atmosphere improves and that bullying is reduced.

More than one million children have completed *Zippy's Friends* around the world. Parents and teachers in many countries have seen how it can help. And there is growing evidence that these benefits can last at least well into adolescence.

You can read more about the evaluation results in the Programmes – Evaluation section of our website – www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk



'Seventy-two percent of parents noticed changes in their children's behaviour that they linked with participation in the programme. Children communicated more freely, valued friends, appeared to be more thoughtful, attentive, friendly and sincere, and started understanding others.'

- Survey of Lithuanian parents



What you can do

Although Zippy's Friends is taught by specially trained teachers, you can do a lot to make the programme more effective for your child.

There is one Home Activity for each of the six modules. Your child will bring home a sheet of paper with an activity for the two of you to do together. It won't take long, but you will need to set aside a quiet time for it.

Children enjoy *Zippy's Friends* and will probably want to talk to you about it. Be prepared to listen!

Your child may also bring home pictures that they have drawn or the simple feedback sheets that they complete at the end of each session. Show interest and encourage your children to talk about the session.

You may notice your child being less aggressive, more tolerant and better at solving problems. Encourage all positive changes.

'The programme has transformed our family life. All my children now listen properly to each other. I couldn't believe it when I found out Zippy was just a stick insect!' - Mother



More Resources

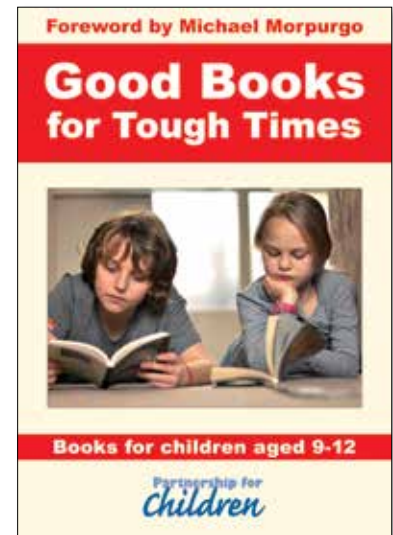
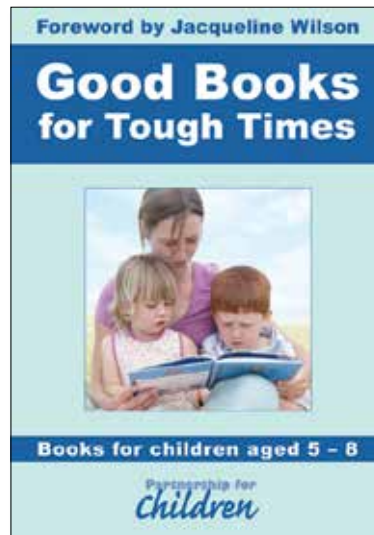
There are a lot of useful free resources in the Parents' section of our website.

Activities

In addition to the Home Activities which you will receive through *Zippy's Friends*, we have many more online. Take a look at them and choose any which you think might be helpful for your child – they're all free.

Reading

Make time to read with your child. Our *Good Books for Tough Times* guides suggest some excellent storybooks, and you can order many of them via the website. Reading together can be really helpful if your child is having to cope with a difficult issue such as bereavement, bullying, divorce or separation.





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