

# Pointers For Parents

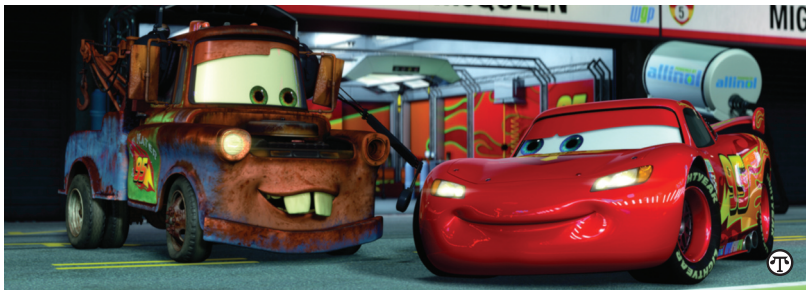
## Kid-Friendly Tips For Making Friends And Being True To Yourself

(NAPSA)—To have good friends, children need to first learn how to be a good friend, and parents are a child's No. 1 guide to establishing healthy friendships. Perhaps most importantly, parents need to show children how to value themselves and, in turn, find the value in others. Things you can do to help include:

•**Demonstrate good listening.** This may sound easy but it can be a challenge to put down the phone or BlackBerry, stop multi-tasking and really focus on what your child has to say. Make eye contact while the child talks to show he or she has your full attention and ask for the same respect when others are talking. You can monitor the progress they're making by listening to what they say happened at a playdate or on the playground.

•**Help recognize strengths.** Praising your children when they demonstrate unique talents or strengths helps to shape confidence as they begin to navigate social situations. In addition to calling out talents or skills, be sure to also focus on positive character traits, such as a good sense of humor or generosity. Whenever possible, encourage your child to celebrate friends' strengths as well.

•**Notice their interests.** Guiding your children to activities where they can meet other youngsters with shared interests is one of the most likely ways to introduce them to those with whom they can form and maintain strong friendships. Younger children often do best with one-on-one playdates as they explore various interests, but as they get older, larger group activities can be helpful. For example, kids who like playing soccer can usually connect with other friends on a soccer team, while those who like to sing or pretend can meet



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**Car characters, such as Lightning McQueen and his tow truck buddy Mater, can help youngsters learn to deal with their own friends in difficult situations.**

friends in a choir or theater group.

•**Navigate conflict within friendships with care.** All friendships have ups and downs, so learning to handle conflict with a peer is a valuable skill to focus on. Make sure that sharing, cooperation and taking turns get lots of reinforcement as kids become socialized. Sometimes, a good story or DVD can help open a discussion of more distressing emotions. "Cars 2," now out on Blu-ray and DVD, tackles honest challenges in friendship with loads of humor. Talking about the situations that racecar Lightning McQueen and his tow truck buddy Mater face can help your child think about ways to behave.

For example, in the movie, the clueless tow truck, Mater, with his bumbling, irrepressible innocence, proves to be a problem (just as McQueen feared) from the very first stop in Tokyo, where he mistakes a dish of red-hot wasabi for pistachio ice cream, to the final race in Italy where Mater's confusion jeopardizes the race before finally saving the day using strengths only he can offer. Families can use the film's plot to help kids open up about their own disturbing feelings and flaring tempers when friends do embarrass-

ing things or disappoint in some way. Learning to express emotions is a valuable skill and when things get heated, tips as simple as reminding your child to pause, smile and focus on something nice about the friend can help cool the situation.

Mater's loyalty and good intentions as well as his car-geek smarts provide plenty of examples to help kids understand the value of friends with special talents. The cars' adventures in the film show how friends sometimes need to give each other space and time apart before they find it possible to genuinely apologize and be ready to make up, but that in the end, when each friend is true to himself and is eventually accepted and celebrated for who he is, everyone wins.

•**Show compassion when things get hard.** Go ahead and empathize with your child's pain but keep it in perspective. Making friends is a lifelong process and the shared bumps that kids experience are a valuable part of the most enduring friendships. Showing kids how liking yourself and your friends, dents and all—disagreements and all—is what real friendship is all about, and will reap rewards that can last a lifetime.