

Parents and Carers Guide: Respectful relationships



Recommended quality
Australian texts



Guiding questions and discussion
prompts for you and your child



Suitable for ages 4-13



Introduction

The development of respectful relationships is **foundational to a child's emotional and social growth**. From early childhood, children begin to form their understanding of empathy, communication, and the importance of healthy, positive relationships.

This guide supports parents in nurturing these essential skills at home, using age-appropriate books and practical discussion points. Drawing from the Respectful Relationships initiative, which empowers schools and communities to foster equality, respect, and resilience, this resource offers a curated selection of literature and activities designed to help your child build meaningful connections.

Whether you're reading together at home or discussing themes throughout daily life, the books and strategies here will help strengthen your child's understanding of respect, responsibility, and kindness. **Each book is paired with guiding questions to spark thoughtful discussions and help your child reflect on important values such as empathy, conflict resolution, and understanding others.** These questions are designed to encourage meaningful conversations that support the development of emotional intelligence, communication skills, and positive social behaviour.

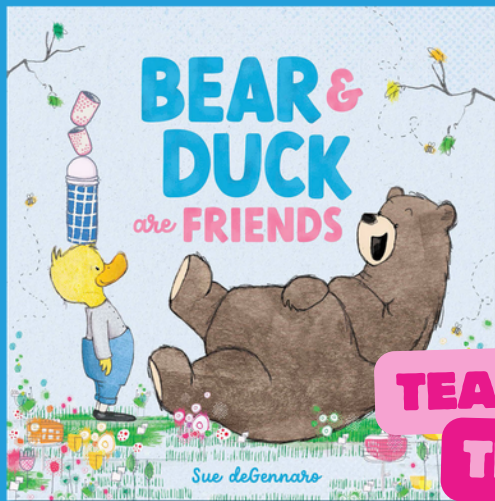
This guide is structured to be flexible, providing **accessible suggestions for busy parents while offering deeper insights through teacher resources for those looking to explore the topics further.** We understand that your time is valuable, so each section is designed to be concise and actionable, making it easy to weave these important conversations into your everyday routines.



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Ingrid has been working with children and in education for 15 years. Her experience spans roles as an Early Childhood Educator in both long daycare and preschools, a private nanny, and most recently as a primary teacher. Ingrid graduated from Macquarie University with a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education Birth to 12) in 2014 and returned in 2015 to complete a Graduate Diploma in Special Education.



Bear & Duck Are Friends

Sue DeGennaro

Suitable for ages 4-6

TEACHER TIP!

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How it supports the development of respectful relationships

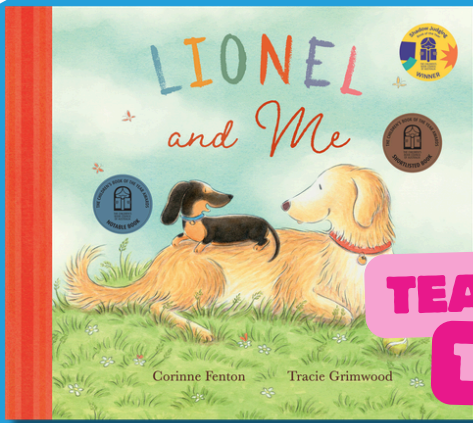
This book teaches children the importance of empathy, communication, and acceptance. It highlights how Bear and Duck, despite their differences, learn to appreciate each other's uniqueness and work together to solve problems, demonstrating that respect in friendships comes from understanding, valuing differences, and supporting one another.

Through their journey, the story encourages children to express their feelings, listen to others, and overcome fears in a thoughtful manner, laying the groundwork for healthy, respectful relationships.



Guiding questions to encourage thoughtful conversations

- How would you describe Duck? How would you describe Bear?
- How do Bear and Duck show kindness and respect for each other, even though they are so different?
- How did Bear feel on pages 9 and 10 when he comes to dance class? How did Duck help him to feel better on pages 15 - 18?
- Why do you think Bear listened to Duck and closed his eyes? Why did having his eyes closed help Bear?
- Can you think of a time where you felt scared to do something? What helped you?
- What makes Bear and Duck's friendship special? How can we show our friends that we care about them?
- Why is it important to listen to your friends and understand their feelings?



Lionel and Me

Corinne Fenton & Tracie Grimwood

Suitable for ages 4-7

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How it supports the development of respectful relationships

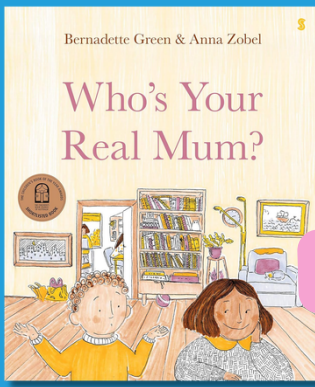
This book addresses love, jealousy and rivalry, emotions that children might experience. Through the eyes of Maverick, a golden retriever, children are introduced to the challenges of adapting to change and the feelings that arise when a new friend or family member enters the picture. The book encourages children to reflect on their own emotions, particularly in relationships with siblings or peers, and learn how to navigate complex feelings with empathy and understanding.

By focusing on Maverick's journey of acceptance and friendship with the new puppy, Lionel, the book teaches children the importance of patience, communication, and respect in building healthy relationships. The illustrations help children connect emotionally with the characters and deepen their understanding of how actions and expressions impact relationships.



Guiding questions to encourage thoughtful conversations

- What was Maverick's life like at the beginning of the book? How did it change when Lionel joined the family? Have you ever felt this way before, after a change in your life?
- What did Lionel do that made Maverick feel annoyed or jealous? How do you think Maverick felt in that moment?
- On page 18, what happened when Maverick "had enough! "? What were the consequences of his actions?
- How does Maverick learn to accept Lionel as a friend? What are some ways we can help new friends or family members feel welcome?
- What can we learn from Maverick and Lionel's friendship? What does their story teach us about how to deal with feelings of jealousy or change?
- How do the pictures in the book show how Maverick and Lionel are feeling? How can we tell how someone feels just by looking at them?
- What is one way we can show kindness to someone who might be feeling left out or jealous, just like Maverick did with Lionel?



Who's Your Real Mum?

Bernadette Green & Anna Zobel

Suitable for ages 6-8

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How it supports the development of respectful relationships

Who's Your Real Mum? thoughtfully addresses same-sex parents through a child's perspective, promoting understanding of diverse family structures. It teaches that relationships are based on more than just biology.

By encouraging children to reflect on the emotional bonds they share with caregivers, the book reinforces that respectful relationships are built on trust, empathy, and acceptance. It shows that family is defined by love, care, and connection, fostering respect for all types of relationships and identities. Ensuring every child feels their family is accepted and acknowledged is vital for their sense of belonging.



Guiding questions to encourage thoughtful conversations

- On page 2, why do you think Nicholas asks, "But which one's your real mum?" What do you think he means by that question?
- What makes a family special? How do Elvi's mums show their love for her? What are some ways we can show love for our family members?
- What are some things that Elvi shares with Nicholas about her mums? How do you think she feels about them?
- Who do you see in the family photos at the end of the book? Who are the special people in our family?
- How does the story show that a family doesn't have to look the same for everyone? Can you think of other families that are different from ours?
- Why do you think Nicholas is confused about Elvi's family? How can we help others understand our family if they're confused or curious?
- What does the book teach us about respecting all kinds of families, no matter what they look like?



Katerina Cruickshanks

Daniel Gray-Barnett

Suitable for ages 7-9

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How it supports the development of respectful relationships

This book highlights the value of accepting differences, even when they don't align with our usual expectations, and teaches that relationships are strengthened when people are allowed to be their authentic selves. Katerina's journey helps children learn the importance of inclusivity, empathy, and mutual respect, both within friendships and in broader relationships.

The text includes the importance of respecting gender identity and using inclusive language, such as non-binary pronouns, to show support and respect.



Guiding questions to encourage thoughtful conversations

- After reading pages 1 – 8, pause and ask: what do you think Katerina's personality is like? How would you describe their energy and actions?
- On page 2, we are introduced to Katerina's pronouns. The text refers to Katerina as 'they'. Why do you think it's important to use the correct pronouns for others?
- What are some of the things Katerina does to be a "wild child"? Why do you think Katerina's wildness makes people want to send them away?
- How do we show respect for others who may act differently than we expect or understand?
- How do the people around Katerina feel when they realise they miss Katerina's energy? What does this teach us about appreciating differences in others?
- Have you ever said or done something and regretted your actions? Can you tell me more about what happened? What did you learn from that experience?
- Why is it important to let people be themselves, even if they don't follow the same expectations as others? How can we show respect for someone's identity?



Dirrarn

Carl Merrison & Hakea Hustler

Suitable for ages 8-10

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How it supports the development of respectful relationships

Dirrarn encourages children to respect and appreciate both their own cultural heritage and that of others. By highlighting First Nations culture, the book teaches the importance of connection to the land, community, and shared history in shaping identity. It also explores themes of empathy and understanding through Mia's experiences with bullying and feeling misunderstood.

The story emphasises the value of listening, kindness, and standing up for what's right, showing how respect for diversity and inclusivity strengthens relationships. *Dirrarn* fosters a deeper understanding of others, teaching the reader to embrace differences and support others.



Guiding questions to encourage thoughtful conversations

- How does Charlotte treat Mia throughout the story? Can you remember some specific actions or words that she uses? How do you think these actions affect Mia emotionally? (see examples on pages 7 - 8, 42, 66 - 67)
- If you were the one being bullied, how would you want others to support you? What could bystanders, friends, or teachers do to help the person being bullied?
- Why do you think Mia feels like the teachers aren't noticing the bullying (pages 9 & 18 - 19)? What could Mia do to communicate her feelings to the teachers in a way that helps them understand her perspective? What happens in Chapter 9 (pages 71 - 76) when she does speak up?
- Why is it important to have someone you trust, like Tilly, to talk to about difficult situations? How does talking to someone help you feel supported and less isolated? (see pages 26 - 27)
- How does making fun of someone's language affect their sense of identity and self-worth? Have you ever witnessed someone being made fun of for how they speak? How can we show kindness in these situations? (see pages 7 - 8)
- What would you do if you were Mia and felt scared by someone calling out to you from a car? (pages 34 - 35)



That Bird Has Arms!

Kate Temple & Jol Temple
Ronojoy Ghosh & Niharika Hukku
Suitable for ages 10-12

TEACHER

TIP!

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How it supports the development of respectful relationships

That Bird Has Arms! teaches children to embrace differences and appreciate what makes others unique. It shows that individuality is something to be celebrated and not judged. By exploring Roy's unique characteristic (his arms) children learn about respect, empathy, inclusivity, and kindness.

The story encourages readers to understand that what makes someone different can also make them strong, and how showing respect for others' differences is key to building positive relationships.



Guiding questions to encourage thoughtful conversations

- How might having arms impact Roy? Can you think of some positives and negatives?
- How did Roy feel on pages 3 – 6 when he heard the comments from the other birds? What was his reaction?
- How did Roy feel when the Myna birds made the tweets about him? What does this teach us about what we say online? How could a group chat build and perpetuate a rumour?
- What happened to Roy's behaviour after the other birds found out about his arms? Why might the other birds' behaviour impact Roy's behaviour?
- Roy is unique – do you feel that this might threaten the birds in some way?
- The birds are behaving as a flock, and the story is written as 'them' against Roy. Have you ever been in an 'us' vs. 'them' scenario? How did it make you feel? What did you do?
- How does the story show that differences don't make someone less valuable or important? How can we show respect for someone who might look or act differently than us?



Worse Things

Sally Murphy & Sarah Davis

Suitable for ages 10-13

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How it supports the development of respectful relationships

Worse Things explores themes of resilience, empathy, and connection, offering valuable lessons on how shared experiences can bridge differences. Through the characters of Blake, Jolene, and Amed, the story shows how a mutual love for sport can bring together people from diverse backgrounds, allowing them to find common ground despite personal challenges.

The book emphasises the importance of respect, as each character learns to understand and support one another through their struggles. By demonstrating how relationships are built on mutual empathy, understanding, and the willingness to offer support, the novel encourages children to recognise the power of respect in nurturing meaningful connections.



Guiding questions to encourage thoughtful conversations

- What hobbies and interests would you use to describe yourself? Do you think that defines you? What about your friends? (Pages 30 - 36.)
- Have you ever felt left out or like you didn't belong? (See pages 68 - 75.) How did you cope, and how can we help others feel included?
- In what ways do the characters show resilience when faced with their challenges? How can we turn challenges into opportunities? (Pages 166 - 168.)
- On pages 152 - 154 Jolene and Amed connect over books and reading. How can books help us as humans to communicate and share our thoughts, feelings and experiences?
- How can sport or a shared common interest help build respect and understanding between people from different backgrounds? (Pages 185 - 188.)
- Can you think of a moment where empathy made a difference in the story? How did the characters support one another? (Pages 194 - 198.)



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About PETAA

PETAA is one of the largest associations for primary educators in Australia with over 40,000 educators across Australia in our member community. PETAA supports primary school educators with:

- Evidence-informed publications and teaching resources to support explicit and meaningful instruction
- An extensive program of expert-led and research-based professional learning courses
- Practical resources for the classroom, including a guide that maps authentic texts to the Federal Government's Phonics Progression
- Curriculum units to support cross-curriculum learning through high-quality Australian texts, with a commitment to supporting the use of First Nations and diverse literature in classrooms
- Advocacy and research that supports and furthers the profession of Australian primary educators and school leaders



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