



Being a Friend

A PEATC
Do You Know

Factsheet for Virginia's
Youth brought to you by
Virginia's Youth

Special thanks to the members of
PEATC's Youth Advisory Board
for their expertise!

“Have a big enough heart
to love unconditionally,
and a broad enough mind
to embrace the differences
that make each of us
unique.”

— D.B. Harrop

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How to be Friends with Someone with Special Needs

Everyone is different. Some just happen to be a little more different than others. About 14% of kids have what is called a developmental disability. A developmental disability is something that delays a person's body or brain. When a person has a developmental disability, it means that it takes them longer to process things, and harder to learn. For people with physical disabilities, it may be harder to walk, pick up things, or write. Though “different” may be scary at first, people with disabilities just want to be your friend.

Here are some tips on how to be the best possible friend you can be:

- ❖ Be patient! A lot of times, someone with special needs can't understand what's going on; they just need a little more time to process it. So when you're playing a game with someone with special needs give them time to understand the rules.
- ❖ Some people with intellectual disabilities find it hard to understand concepts- for example, friendship. Your friend with special needs might tell you that you're her best friend, but the next day, she tells another girl that she's her best friend. It's not that she doesn't want to be your best friend- she just might not understand the idea of it. Don't take it personally- just try to understand that her brain works a little differently.
- ❖ Just be nice! At the end of the day, everyone just wants to be treated nicely. When your friend with a disability can't run as fast or read at the same level as you, don't make fun of them. Be happy for them when they achieve something, just like they'd be happy for you. Treat them like you would want to be treated!



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