

Friendship - The Number One Need

The #1 Need

Great energy is devoted to determine what a person with a disability needs. Assessments are done, tests are given, observations are made, and more. Then more energy (along with many dollars) is spent trying to meet these needs.

For adults with disabilities, the focus often continues to expand on goals they worked on as children (especially behavior!), as well as habilitation, job skills, transportation, and more.



It seems the **#1 need** of the vast majority of children and adults with disabilities – regardless of the type of disability, age of the person, or anything else – is seldom identified by professionals.
What is this #1 need? Friends!

How friendships help each other grow!

A friend doesn't care if you have the "functional skills" that are valued by so many. One friend can lead to other friends. A friend can be a gateway to meeting other real needs of a person: employment, transportation, joining a club, enjoying new experiences, and so much more.

We often worry about the social skills of a person with a disability. Aren't friends the best way to improve in this area? All of us want and need to be successful in our own peer groups. Often, folks are expected to "achieve" in order to be successful in the eyes of professionals. How many of us have recognized that a person's behavior is much different (and better) in other environments? In addition, have we ever questioned whether a person's so-called inappropriate behavior might be the result of the person not having friends or social opportunities outside of special (segregated) environments?



What if you had no one to share your secrets with, vent to, joke with, and so much more?

Now, try to imagine if the only people in your life are those who are paid to be around you.

Unimaginable!

The base of friendship

Friendships are made based on **shared interests**. When we make the effort to identify a person's interests, and connect the person to others who share those interests, we've opened the door to new opportunities and potential friendships.



Being a friend to all!

At the end of the day, what is more important? Achieving this skill or that, or having a friend who wants to be with you, just the way you are? And shouldn't anyone with a disability also enjoy the life-changing joys and rewards of being a friend to someone else who needs a friend?