



Teacher Guide

My Friend Jake

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Using The Series In Your Classroom

As a teacher, I understand how difficult it is to fit additional teaching moments into an already busy day. Here are a few ideas on how to incorporate The My Friend Series into your classroom.

***Remember this book does not have to be read in order and each page does not have to be read. Read the situations that relate to your classroom or that you want to discuss.**

- If you are a teacher that works with exceptional children, try to introduce these books at the start of the school year. This will help to promote understanding and foster positive peers relationships with your students from the beginning.
- You may also introduce these books as the situation presents itself during the school year. Such as with students that have transferred, students with new individual education plans, students that are being served under section 504, or students that share similar characteristics of students with Down syndrome.
- Use similar situations from the book during those teachable moments throughout the day and school year. Refer back to the story and discuss how the characters in the book acted and reacted and how this integrates into your classroom.
- Use the book during whole group lessons or part or a small group reading lesson.
- When teaching social skills or classroom rules in both whole group and small group sessions, refer back to the books to encourage students to discuss challenging behaviors or feelings.

Extension Discussion Topics

Down syndrome is identified as a disorder that has a set of similar symptoms or characteristics, which are related to the presence of extra chromosome 21. Those characteristics include: short stature and shortened bones, thick tongues and small oral cavities, moderate to mild intellectual disabilities, low or inadequate muscle tone

Scenario 1

- Discuss similarities of students in your classroom. Examples, same hair color, book bag, shirts, shoes, smiles, favorite toys, foods, etc. Use these similarities to build connections.

Scenario 2

- This is a great time to talk about how everyone learns in a different way. Give examples of your favorite learning style. Ask students how they like to learn. What their favorite activities are.

** As a teacher try and making learning fun and accessible to all students. This can be done in a variety of ways some of which include, Encouraging singing, clapping and dancing. Repeating finger plays and nursery rhymes for retention.. Using visual and sensory cues (pair actions with words, finger cues, and pacing) as well as tactile approaches (sandpaper words, draw in sand, paints, etc.)*

Scenario 3

- Introduce or discuss the variety of adults that work in the room. For example, paraprofessionals, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, English language coaches, extended learning coaches, behavior coaches, etc.
- Talk about their roles in the classroom and how each adult helps children.
- This is a great time to discuss the class schedule and what to do if children become distracted or if an adult enters the room.

Scenario 4

- Discuss how everyone can have difficulty focusing. Make connections to when you as the teacher have had this happen to you or give the students a chance to talk about their experiences.
- Talk about strategies in your classroom that help with focus and attention (sensory bin, break area, etc.)

** Try to minimize distractions in the classroom. Use prompts or cues to capture attention. Utilize different colors or textures. Minimize or remove distractions. Avoid seating students near windows, doors, or high traffic areas. Give immediate feedback or praise so that students associate rewards with their efforts*

Scenario 5

- Discuss with the students how everyone's work area may look different. Each student has a different way of learning and a variety of tools that can help him or her to do their best. Make connects and describe how this looks in your classroom.

** Assign well-explained tasks that are suitable for the student. Materials that are given must be meaningful and familiar. Use positive language and encourage peer buddies and social rewards. Reward independence and help students to maintain motivation.*

Scenario 6

- Make a connection to other students that may wear glasses. If there aren't any students that wear them, ask them if they know someone who does. Explain what glasses are used for and how they work.

** Refractive error (the need for glasses) is much more common in children with Down syndrome than in the general population. This refractive error can be hyperopia (farsightedness), astigmatism, or myopia (nearsightedness). Another problem is weak accommodation (difficulty changing the focusing power of the eye from distance to near).*

Scenario 7

- Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.
- Sign Language is a formal language employing a system of hand gestures for communication

- Discuss the different ways that people can communicate. Make connections to how students in your class communicate. Ex, hand gestures, non-verbal cues, pointing, speaking, communication devices or assistive technology, etc.
- Show an example of a different way to communicate or have the students show examples.
- If you have a student that communicates in a way your class is not familiar with, let that student show them their way of communicating and give them the chance to answer any questions that classmates might have.

Scenario 8

- Take this time to discuss or revisit what the hands on or touching policy is in your classroom. Talk with the students about how this applies to the situation in this scenario.
- Talk with the students about using their words or communicating in an effective manner. This can help in future scenarios as well.

Scenario 9

- If this is a situation that occurs in your classroom, discuss it at this time. Talk about how the children feel when their friend is sick. How does the student feel?
- Discuss ways that the class can keep in contact or help the student feel apart of the class when they are away. Give examples.

** Chronic health problems can have a big impact on learning. Beware of physical characteristics and health conditions that may affect classroom success. It is important to remember that behaviors that you may observe in the classroom could have a medical basis.*

Scenario 10

- This is the perfect page to help continue a discussion about acceptance and inclusion of everyone. Discuss how we all have similarities and differences and how to celebrate those and learn from each other.
- At this time ask if there are any questions about situations or characteristics that were talked about in the book.
- Ask what connections the students made to their lives or classroom environment.
- Task the students with finding one way for each of them to be kind to someone else everyday. Discuss examples and what they may look like.

Thank you for helping to spread awareness and promote acceptance inclusion of all students by sharing a book from The My Friend Series.

I hope that this teacher guide has been useful. For more information about other books in the series please visit www.themyfriendseries.com

If you like our product we would love to hear how you shared it with your class and others. Please leave any feedback or pictures on The My Friend Series Facebook page or leave a review through one of the following outlets

Facebook, Barnes and Noble, Amazon, Teachers Pay Teachers, Google.

Any questions, comments, or concerns? Please feel free to email me, Eve Lawrence
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