

ISAAC A. SHEPPARD

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Outgoing or shy, make connections

It doesn't matter whether you're quiet or outgoing, it is important to build relationships with other people, according to health experts.

"Being connected to others creates feelings of belonging, loved, and cared for," says the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The health agency says healthy connections help people manage stress, increase physical activity, and improve sleep, the agency writes in "Social Connectedness," an article on its website.

Having healthy connections can also help you take a break from screen time, help others, and join groups or clubs with people who have similar interests, the article said.

Fourth-grade core reporters for the *Healthy Shark* interviewed Ms. Melissa Davila, school counselor, about making connections.

Ms. Davila says a social connection is a person who is not in your family whom you interact with. A healthy social connection is when you have respect for each other. You share interest and time with each other, she said.

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Illustration by Julianys Rivas-Borges

You can learn a lot by joining a group

Group activities and team sports help you work together and promote cheering each other on, says Mr. David McGhee, health and physical education teacher at Sheppard.

Being in group activities helps you manage stress and gives you a feeling you're not alone, according to experts at the Mayo Clinic, a hospital and research institution.

When you participate in group activities, it provides you with encouragement to keep going. For example, you may not love running, but it can be more enjoyable when you can talk with a friend while running, according to Dr. Laurie Friedman Donze from National Institutes of Health. Also, the organi-

zation's article "Ways to Improve Your Child's Mental Health Game in Sports," says that "while most sports involve winning or losing, it's important to focus on having fun and how the game is played."

Healthy Shark reporters interviewed Mr. McGhee about the importance of group activities and sharing experiences with others. Below is the Q&A; responses have been edited and shortened for the article.

Q: What kinds of group activities are good for students' physical health?

Mr. McGhee: Group activities that are good for a student's health are obstacle courses and relay races.

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Try your best when you join an activity

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We used to do them around Thanksgiving time for the Turkey Trot. It was a school activity where the students did eight to nine different obstacles.

Q: What kinds of group activities are good for a student's mental health?

Mr. McGhee: Group activities that are good for students' mental health would be team sports. It gives them an opportunity to help each other and assist each other when they need help. Some team sports would be soccer, baseball, or basketball.

Q: What are your favorite group activities to do with students and why?

Mr. McGhee: Team sports are my favorite group activities because I have been part of many teams and



Illustration by Analiz Perez

sports in my life. It's a great experience to be part of a team. You get to build friendships and teamwork skills. That's why I try to encourage you to be part of a team.

Q: What advice would you give to kids who are nervous about doing a group activity?

Mr. McGhee: I would say to try your best. It takes time to learn things. Sooner or later, you will get it. Since you are all so supportive and helping, your friends are there to help you. You also don't know, your friends could be nervous too.

Q: Is there anything you would like to add?

Mr. McGhee: Physical activity and sports are going to teach you a lot of lessons in life that you get to use when you get older.

Book: Why kindness is important

You Can Be A Good Friend (No Matter What!)

Written by Taraji P. Henson

Illustrated by Paul Kellam

This book is about a girl named Lil TJ. She is starting school and wants to make some new friends. But it doesn't go the way she wants. She meets a bully instead of a friend.

Start a conversation

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An unhealthy social connection is when people disrespect each other, Ms. Davila explained. Another way a connection is unhealthy is if friends take friends for granted.

If kids want to create a new social connection, they can find new groups of friends and try to get into different circles, said Ms. Davila. If kids have a hard time making social connections, they may want to start a conversation with a person, especially if they're a very quiet person

At the end of the interview, Ms. Davila gave this advice: "In order to make friends you have to be friendly and open to meetings. You should get to know people, even if they're different."

—By *Healthy Shark* reporters

Lil TJ's classmate, Beau, teases her about everything she does, so she becomes anxious.

Healthy Shark fourth-grade reporters said they liked this book because it's about getting through a hard time.

Lil TJ uses advice from her grandma to help her. Lil TJ's grandma tells her, "Honey attracts more flies," which means being sweet like honey can help connect you to others, said reporters.

Several reporters said they liked the book because Little TJ was nice to the bully even though the bully caused her to become anxious.

In this book, students learned to be nice even if people aren't nice to you at first. Forgive them if they are mean to you. You may become friends.

"Being nice can take you to somewhere good with others," said Julianys Rivas-Borges.

Seventeen out of 20 students surveyed recommend this book for children in kindergarten to fourth grade.

—Review by *Healthy Shark* reporters

Isaac A. Sheppard Healthy Shark

The *Healthy Shark* is a publication of Isaac A. Sheppard School in the School District of Philadelphia. Fourth graders in Room 306 are the reporters for this edition. The *Healthy Shark's* faculty advisor is Mr. McGhee and Sheppard's principal is Mrs. Torres.

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