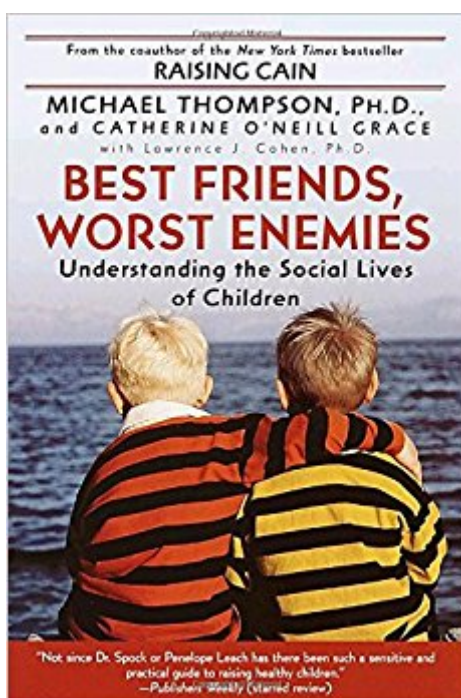


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# Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Understanding The Social Lives Of Children



## Synopsis

"With uncommon sensitivity and intelligence... [this] book offers parents a window into their kids' often tumultuous relationships with classmates." - Time

Friends broaden our children's horizons, share their joys and secrets, and accompany them on their journeys into ever wider worlds. But friends can also gossip and betray, tease and exclude. Children can cause untold suffering, not only for their peers but for parents as well. In this wise and insightful book, psychologist Michael Thompson, Ph.D., and children's book author Catherine O'Neill Grace, illuminate the crucial and often hidden role that friendship plays in the lives of children from birth through adolescence. Drawing on fascinating new research as well as their own extensive experience in schools, Thompson and Grace demonstrate that children's friendships begin early "in infancy" and run exceptionally deep in intensity and loyalty. As children grow, their friendships become more complex and layered but also more emotionally fraught, marked by both extraordinary intimacy and bewildering cruelty. As parents, we watch, and often live through vicariously, the tumult that our children experience as they encounter the "cool" crowd, shifting alliances, bullies, and disloyal best friends. *Best Friends, Worst Enemies* brings to life the drama of childhood relationships, guiding parents to a deeper understanding of the motives and meanings of social behavior. Here you will find penetrating discussions of the difference between friendship and popularity, how boys and girls deal in unique ways with intimacy and commitment, whether all kids need a best friend, why cliques form and what you can do about them. Filled with anecdotes that ring amazingly true to life, *Best Friends, Worst Enemies* probes the magic and the heartbreak that all children experience with their friends. Parents, teachers, counselors "indeed anyone who cares about children" will find this an eye-opening and wonderfully affirming book. "Relevant and compelling... Parents will be wiser for reading." - The Boston Globe

The stories in this book come from many perspectives - those of therapists, educators, and parents. The wise, kind authors give us a fresh and cogent analysis of this critically important issue." - Mary Pipher, Ph.D., author of *Reviving Ophelia*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Not since Dr. Spock or Penelope Leach has there been such a sensitive and practical guide to raising healthy children and this one doesn't end at potty training. Child therapists Thompson (coauthor of bestseller *Raising Cain*) and Cohen (*Playful Parenting*) have teamed up with Washington Post columnist and children's writer Grace (all three are parents) to describe the social lives of kids and the appropriate roles of parents, teachers and school administrators. They explore the stages of children's development, from parent-bonded to quasi-asocial toddler, the learning-the-rules phase in elementary school and adolescent and romantic bonding. Each phase may bring some negative experiences including some outright cruelty that can be hard on both parents and children, but sometimes necessary for learning about the world. They advise parents to think of themselves as "lifeguards" at the pool, aware of what's going on with their kids, but only intervening in the rare crisis. The book wraps up on a practical note, with chapters on how schools can be proactive and how parents can be most useful. Their advice? Don't worry so much, set a good example, keep perspective and relax most kids turn out okay. Thompson and Grace's breezy "we've all been there" anecdotal style will bring great comfort to any parents who're worried about their kid's social life in other words, any parent. (Sept.) Forecast: The planned 12-city author tour and print advertising in the *New York Times* and *USA Today* will yield big sales, supported by the strength of Thompson's name and Grace's media connections. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Bullying has become an area of concern in the media and society. This book discusses that topic but weaves it into a broader study of children's friendships. Thompson, a clinical psychologist and coauthor of *Raising Cain*; Grace, an author of children's books and a former columnist for the *Washington Post*; and psychologist Cohen (*Playful Parenting*) present a developmental perspective as they describe how children's social lives develop from toddlerhood to adolescence. Research and analysis are interspersed with personal anecdotes and vignettes in an engaging style. The book

concludes with advice to teachers and parents on how to improve social life in schools and support children's friendships. This is not a formulaic, how-to book. As the authors themselves acknowledge, the best way to learn about friendship is to practice it. However, it does provide useful perspective on a critical aspect of adolescent development, which tends to be overlooked until schoolyard feuds erupt into violent confrontations. The book may also be reassuring to parents since it outlines information on current dating styles, acceptable ranges of friendship patterns, and normal gender differences in interpersonal relationships. Recommended for public library parenting collections to complement Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese's more narrowly focused *Cliques: 8 Steps To Help Your Child Survive the Social Jungle* (LJ 2/1/01). Antoinette Brinkman, M.L.S., Evansville, IN Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This was an incredibly insightful book about the social lives of children. As a parent of two boys--10 and 7--I saw many of the situations they experience in the book. It also helped relieve my anxiety about how to deal with the inevitable conflict that comes from interaction with other children, especially in school. One of the most valuable insights was the idea that parents should not "interview for pain". In other words, don't repeatedly ask about the trouble your child has had with kid x because it reinforces the negative, and does not acknowledge the fact that kids get over hurts far more quickly than adults. Highly recommended for parents and teachers.

Michael Thompson, Ph.D. is the author of the bestseller "Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys. His latest, written with compassion, humor, and practicality, is an insightful look into the sometimes mysterious world of child development. As a special education teacher, and soon to be school counselor, I have long held that those who have children, and work with children need a keener understanding on why children do the things they do, if we are to care for them, and serve them better. This book will go along way in fostering this understanding among parents, teachers, and practioners because it helps us understand how a child views her world. Written in conjunction with journalist Catherine O'Neill Grace and Lawrence Cohen, Ph.D. "Best Friends, Worst Enemies..." provides such a keen insight into the social lives of children, it is almost as if it was written by a child, because they have such an excellent perspective.

After watching a feature documentary on the power of social relationships to shape a child's life into adulthood, I was already interested in learning more. This book filled the bill, especially the sections

which revealed how children use power (and even bullying) to both include some children and exclude others. I think most of us remember the playground bullies but what this book did was show how parents can help to change bullying behavior, give their children skills to handle bullies and lessen the damaging effects of their behavior. This book focuses on far more than bullies and those who purchase it will find it filled with rich insights into the social world of children and how they view their friendships and connections with other children.

This book is so powerful. As a parent or educator, it takes you on a step by step journey of the stages your child will encounter as he/she grows up. I learned so much. I would recommend this book to anyone who is going to have a baby. Be prepared. I wish I had read it before my child was born rather than years after.

Michael Thompson's, *Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Understanding the Social Lives of Children* is the best book there is about the psycho-social development of children. It's readable for everyone, though it was a developmental psychologist who recommended it to me initially. I've since sent it to every mother I know and they've all done the same for their friends who have children. Dr. Thompson spoke at our local school, a lab school on the UCLA campus, and the kids, from 5 years to 11 years, and teachers alike were mesmerized. Dr. Thompson was born to do what he does. I used his book as a guide in the emotional growth of my own son.

This book really knows where children are coming from and is well written. The author explains "child speak" and what they really mean by their behaviors and remarks. A must read for parents and teachers!

Got this book for my daughter who has two boys and she was very pleased with the information and feels that she learned a great deal that will assist her in understanding the boys as they mature

Fantastic book about friendships and cliques

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