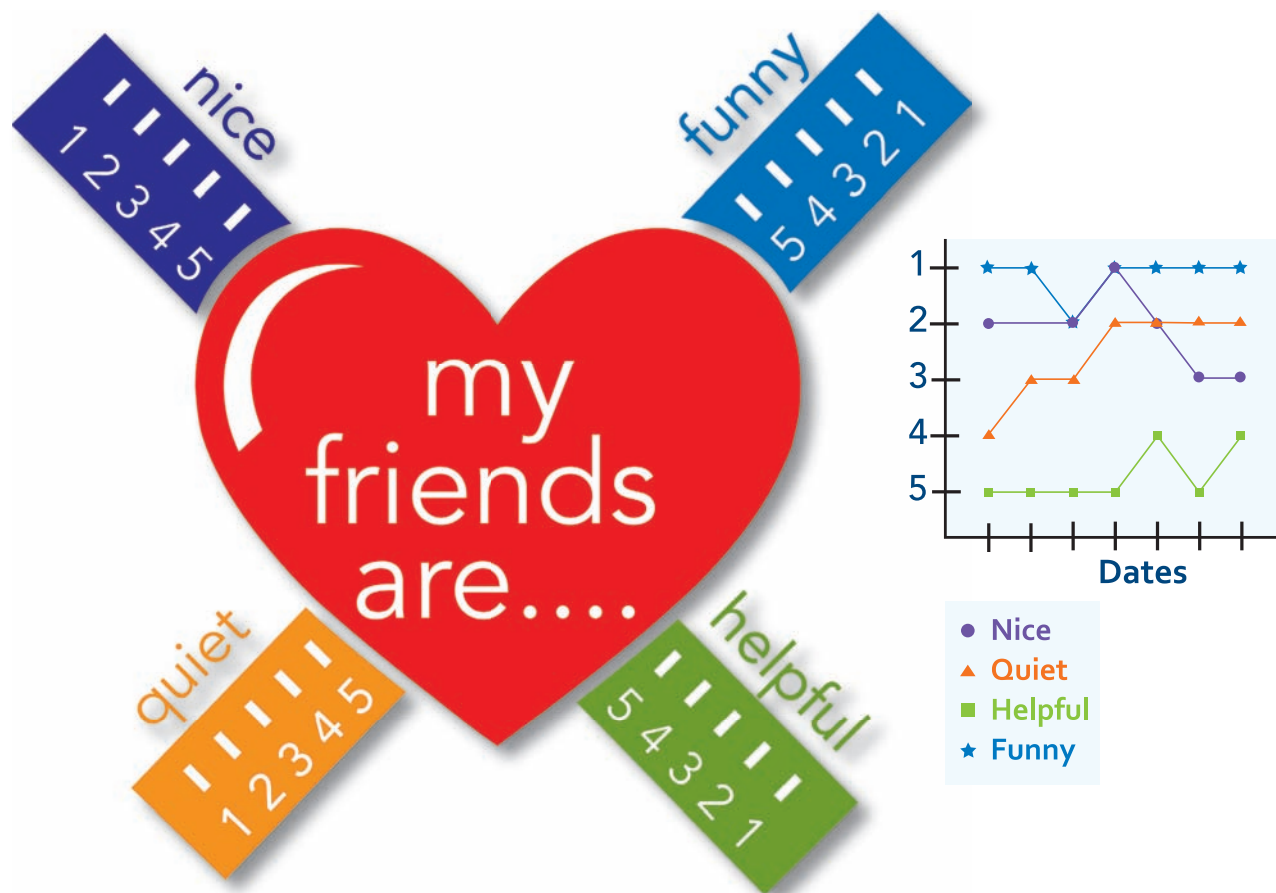


The Friend-O-Meter Helps Students with ASD Make Good Choices

Without adult intervention, the student with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may not seek out friends. In contrast, she may tend to accept almost anyone who approaches her in a friendly manner, which can be a potentially dangerous practice. In their book, *The Autism Spectrum Disorders IEP Companion* (see page 79), Dr. Gail Richard and Dr. Tina Veale suggest a way to help the student develop a strategy for selecting suitable friends. Have the student identify characteristics she most desires in a friend (nice, hard-working, well-behaved, fun). Use these traits to construct a Friend-O-Meter. This device is a series of rulers with the numbers 1-5. Write one trait above each ruler. Have the student identify a person who is a candidate for friendship. Then use the Friend-O-Meter to rate the person across all salient traits. You may graph the results over several analyses of the same candidate to visually show whether this person is likely to be a good friend for the student. The Friend-O-Meter turns the simultaneous process of judging people on multiple attributes into a sequential activity that is more manageable for the individual with ASD. It also converts decision-making from an intuitive to a logical process.



Adapted from *The Autism Spectrum Disorders IEP Companion* by Gail J. Richard and Tina K. Veale
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