**Too Shy to Say Hi?**

For some children, the presence of an adult other than you sets their hearts racing and palms sweating. Here's how to help your bashful one work toward interacting comfortably.

**Give him time.** It's tempting to jump in and tell people that your child is shy. But shyness doesn't equal helplessness. Some kids just need a gentle reminder to take their time while searching for the right response—even if they're stuck just trying to remember their own name.

**Enlist the family.** Encourage your child to practice making conversation with an aunt or family friend. Remind him of details to help him warm up. "Aunt Jenny has two cats and a funny parakeet. You read her the bunny book last time we saw her." Focusing on the other person can help your child to feel less self-conscious.

**Build on past success.** Remind your child how good it felt the last time she was brave with something like, "Remember when you thanked the waitress and she gave you a high five?" It boosts her confidence in her ability to handle intimidating situations.

**Offer a script.** Whenever she meets someone new, have her say hello and say her name. Then encourage her to make contact when you run errands, like handing the money to the grocery store cashier and saying thank you. Teaching common courtesies provides a logical set of rules for social interaction.

**Let her see you socialize.** Talk to people you run into at a store or on the bus. By watching you interact, your child will learn that being friendly is part of everyday life. Afterward, comment on the conversation. "Isn't it interesting that the bookseller loved this story when she was your age?"

—Laura Amann

Sources: Bernardo J. Carducci, Ph.D., director of Shyness Research Institute, professor of psychology at Indiana University Southeast and author of The Shyness Breakthrough.
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