



Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

We Can Be E-buddies

An activity of the Maria Hertogh series

Maria Hertogh felt sad when she was taken to the Netherlands. Read about why she might have felt that her world had turned upside down — you will find the stories at <http://more.whatsup.sg>.

One difference between Maria Hertogh’s time and ours is that we now have the internet. Perhaps she may have adjusted better in the Netherlands if she could have emailed her family and friends in Malaya. A second difference is that there are more school counselors to help kids in distress. Now, there are even student peer counselors. So that you too will be better able to advice your friends, work in pairs on the following to practice your helping skills.

1. Pretend that the two of you are “e-buddies” for a younger class. The students in that class email you when they feel lonely or anxious. You try to give good advice. You may also refer them to your school counselor for difficult situations.

Two students have emailed you for help. Read their emails below. Discuss what advice would really help each student. Then write your email replies in the spaces below.

Date: 12 Jan 2023
To: Our e-buddies
From: Ron
Subject: Kids mean to my classmate

Dear e-buddy,

A gang of mean kids is picking on a boy in my class. They call him silly names and imitate the way he walks and talks. He does look a little different from all of us. I feel very sad to see him being treated like this. If I say anything, the gang may then pick on me! Can you tell me what to do?

Ron

Date:
To: Ron
From: Your e-buddies
Subject: Kids mean to your classmate

[Your reply]

Dear Ron,

Date: 13 January 2023

To: My e-buddies

From: Khai

Subject: What to do?

Hi friend. My family moved to Singapore this year. I know English. But, my accent is different. Last week, everyone giggled when I said something in class. I think my classmates don't like me at all. I think my accent is irritating them — I don't know why. Now, when anyone says hello to me, I freeze up. I try to answer but the words get stuck in my throat. I was not like this back in my old school. I used to talk a lot. At my old school, I was popular. What can I do? - Khai

Date:

To: Khai

From: Your e-buddies

Subject: What to do?

[Your reply]

Hi Khai,

2. Now think of one other common situation that younger students often need help with. This time, one of you pretends to be the younger student while the other is the e-buddy.

Date: To: From: Subject:
<i>[The student's email]</i>
Date: To: From: Subject:
<i>[Your reply]</i>

3. Discuss the following questions with each other.
- a) How did you feel about replying to these made-up emails?
 - b) In real life, would you be comfortable giving advice to your peers?
 - c) What are some pros and cons of using email instead of meeting face-to-face?
 - d) In your view, should kids volunteer to be peer counselors at school?
 - e) Any other thoughts about helping kids like Maria Hertogh at school?

However good you are at helping others, it is important to tell a reliable, trustworthy adult when someone talks about committing suicide, harming someone else, and any other topic that needs expert help. If Maria had professional help as a child, she may have been saved from a lifetime of misery.