Coping Cat Parents

One Week of Friend Practice

Spending time with a friend gets easier through small, planned practice, not by waiting until he feels ready. This week, you set up a few short, low-pressure steps toward a get-together with one friend, with his brother there for support. **Your job is the setup and the praise, not the talking.** Let him do as much as he can, even if it is slower or quieter than you would like. The goal this week is practice, not a perfect playdate.

1 This week's plan

If a step feels too big, repeat the one before it instead of skipping ahead.

Day	Practice	Brother's job	Your job	Done	How it went
1	**Role-play at dinner: saying hi and suggesting a game. Switch roles once.**	Plays the friend	Set it up, keep it light, praise any try.	☐	
2	**He and his brother plan a get-together: two activities and a snack.**	Helps brainstorm	Ask questions; let him make the choices.	☐	
3	**He texts or video calls the friend for about 5 minutes.**	Sits next to him	Stay nearby. Don't write the text or talk for him.	☐	
4	**He invites the friend to the park this weekend.**	Cheers him on	Handle parent-to-parent logistics only.	☐	
5	**Repeat whichever practice felt hardest so far.**	Joins if needed	Notice effort out loud.	☐	
6	**Park meetup with the friend, about 20 minutes.**	Plays too	Sit on a bench. End while it's going well.	☐	
7	**Talk it over: what went better than the worry predicted?**	Shares what he saw	Praise the week's effort; plan next steps.	☐	

How it went: 1 = anxiety ran the show (skipped it, or we stepped in) 3 = partly did it, with extra help 5 = did it, with little or no rescue

2 What you'll say

The same four steps from your anxiety cycle page.

1. "I can see you're nervous about this,"
2. "and I know you can manage it."
3. "Go ahead and try, and I'll be right here."
4. "Later today we can _____."

If he wants to cancel

Stay calm and skip the long reassurance. Offer a smaller version instead of canceling: shorter, at home, or with his brother more involved. "We're keeping the plan. Which smaller step do you want to try?"

3 Set him up to succeed

- ☐ Keep get-togethers short, with a game or activity ready
- ☐ Have a snack and a backup activity on hand
- ☐ Answer a "what if" question once, then redirect
- ☐ Brief his brother: help get things started, then step back
- ☐ Stay nearby, but out of the room when you can
- ☐ End while it is still going well

Praise the try, not how it went

"You called him even though you felt nervous." "You suggested a game. I noticed that." Specific praise right away works better than a big reward later.

Look away from

Complaining, stalling, and repeated "do I have to" questions. As soon as he takes a step, turn back with warm, specific praise.

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