



Centre for Counselling & Career Advisory

MAKING FRIENDS

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"A friend may be waiting behind a stranger's face."

You know a lot of people than you think. You have met your new roommates and peers, or have realised that your study group is really cool outside the classroom too. Whether they are just acquaintances or your best friends with whom you have grown up into adults. May be you have hundreds of friends on social media, but do you have close friends you want to hang out with? A few special friends you can tell nearly anything? Life is not just about social media; it is not about building a network of hundreds of people. It is about making friends in the real world.

What is a friend?

Since the rise of social media, the definition of "Friend" has evolved; although it has weakened its strength too. In a literal way, a friend is someone who you like a lot and who likes you. Someone you can talk to, enjoy shared interests and go out with. Friendship means trusting each other and caring about each other's feelings. Real friends will know each other very well and understand that it is OK to disagree. You do not have to be beautiful or handsome, have lots of money or be really clever to have friends.

Preparing yourself for Friendship

Friendships are an important part of life, but many of us find it difficult to find, make or keep friends. Life events, such as moving to another University, going abroad for studies or settling down in a new city, can isolate us from our former support group. In other cases, shyness or poor social skills can prevent us from taking the first step in forming a friendship. You may want friendship, but what kind of friend would you make? Factors to consider include:

❖ *Attitudes to others*

If you accept that other people have a right to be different from you, then you open yourself up to the possibility of experiencing

❖ *Dealing with other people*

Think about how you like to be treated, then offer the same to the people in your life.

❖ *Do not expect instant results*

Good friends are not made overnight. Sharing your deepest secrets in one night would not necessarily create a close friendship.

❖ *Restrain the urge to criticise*

Constantly complaining about the failures and weaknesses of other people can make your listener feel distrustful of you.

❖ *Do not gossip*

Potential friends are not going to trust you if you constantly gossip to them about the trials and misfortunes of other people.

❖ *Do not compromise yourself*

Do not allow yourself to compromise yourself for the sake of "fitting in" with a group.

Meeting People

Once you have prepared yourself for this new experience then comes the practical work. To make friends you have to meet people and talk to them. This can be difficult if you do not get out much and especially if you are shy. If you find a society or activity of your interests and where there are other people, then you have something in common with them straight away. It will provide new gateways to form friendships

Start Talking

It might seem easier to just sit in the background and not to make the first move to talk to people. To make friends you need to think about your behaviour. Try to think about how other people perceive you. Is there anything you do that you would not like in someone else? It is not very interesting if someone talks to you and only talks about themselves, without letting you get a word in. So, when you talk to people, make sure you ask them what they think and then also listen to their answer!

"You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes."

When making Friends is difficult

Some people find it difficult to make friends. Perhaps they are shy, or feel they lack the social skills to start a conversation. Few suggestions which can be helpful in making friends are:

- ❖ **Join Societies/Clubs** that share your common interests. Talking about one of your passions, such as travelling or writing short stories.
- ❖ **Watch and learn** from sociable people who make friends easily.
- ❖ **Practice looking people in the eye** when you talk to them.
- ❖ **Listen** to what others are saying.
- ❖ **Smile** quite often.
- ❖ **Look for anyone else** in the room who seems socially awkward, and approach them for conversation.
- ❖ When you talk to someone new, ask them questions about themselves or what they like to do; it is a good way to **get started**.
- ❖ **Social skills** can be learned, so seek professional help if you feel you need it.





Keeping Friendships

Ultimately we need to learn how to keep our friendships going. Though no relationship is all sunshine but surviving the storms together is part of the package. Tips to sustain a friend include

- ❖ **Appreciate your friends** Do not take your friends for granted. Take the time out to thank your friends for enhancing your life, in whichever way suits best.
- ❖ **Offer time and attention** If you are consistently too busy to give time to your friends, they will one day move on without you. Ensure you make friendship an important priority.
- ❖ **Be compassionate** Sometimes a friend may do something which you do not approve of. Put yourself in their shoes.
- ❖ **Do not abuse trust** For example, if a friend tells you a secret, keep it to yourself.
- ❖ **Control jealousy** You may want your best friend to be 'faithful' to you, which means you experience jealousy if they have other close relationships. Learn to appreciate that love for friends.



Try smiling and say "hello" when you meet someone.

Introduce yourself if you do not know each other.

Show good manners by saying "please" and "thank you" and take turns in the conversation.

Show you are listening to them by looking at them and nodding sometimes.

Try asking the other person for their views – if you are talking about your favourite TV programme or holidays for example, you could ask: "Where is your favourite holiday place?"



Take over the whole conversation.

Forget the other person is just as nervous as you and they want you to like them.

Try and tell someone your life history the first time you meet.

Talk at the same time as the other person listen to what they have to say.

Give up – You cannot be friends with everyone you meet, so if you do not get on with some people, do not give up trying.



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