

How to make friends

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One way to be happier is to increase the quality of our friendships. Whether you are a sociable person or a loner, friendships are important. One of the easiest ways to remain engaged and interested at school, at work or in life is to enjoy the company of the people that we are with.

Let's talk about how to build friendships (without turning into some sort of gushy, over the top, Ned Flanders type character).

Look people in the eye

Gaining brief eye contact with people communicates interest and trust. One simple way to do this is to mentally remind yourself to notice the colour of other people's eyes as you say hello to them.

Smile and say hello

While the minimalist "hi" accompanied by a shrug may seem cool, it can also come across as disinterested and uncaring. Smile genuinely when you meet people and let them know you are glad to see them.

Call people by their name - a lot

Most people feel liked and reassured when someone calls them by their name. Try to use their name at least twice in a conversation, once when you meet them and once when you say goodbye.

Be where you are

One of the easy ways to stand out as a good friend is to be with people when you are with them. This means rather than checking messages, or scrolling through social media or sending texts you actually stop, talk, look at and listen to the people you are with.

Feel lucky to know them

One of the really simple ways to be a good friend to someone is to decide that you are lucky to know them.

Ask people what they think

One way of getting past the awkward stage in conversations is to not just ask people what they have been doing but also what they think about something. Seeking their ideas shows that you value them.

Get to know a lot of people

Not everyone you meet will be a close friend. The more people you get to know even a little bit, the more likely you will be able to find friends. It can also be good in life to know some people as good acquaintances as well as having close friends.

Get to know people who are different

One of the ways to live an interesting life is to talk to people who are different than you. Getting to know people from different countries and backgrounds will enrich your life and stretch your ideas.

What young people want in a friend.

I asked over 1,000 young people last year what looked for in a friend. They said:

humour	honesty
kindness and caring	trustworthy
non-judgemental	happiness

Say hello to people you don't know

All of your friends were strangers once. Maybe it is time to start saying hello to some people you would like to be friends with but don't know yet.

The best way to lose an enemy is to make them into a friend- Abraham Lincoln.

How to mend a friendship

All friendships go through some rough times. Generally people seem to know more about how to make friends than they do about how to mend a friendship. This means that if you are going to fix up a friendship you will have to do it- you can't rely on other people knowing how to do it.

Nix it or Fix it

The first thing to decide is whether to nix the friendship and leave it or fix it. Generally it is good to keep as many of your friendships as you can but there are always exceptions. Some friendships just wear out. Others are with people you thought you could be friends with but they end up wanting to control, tease, bully or intimidate you. Not everyone is designed to be your closest friend.

But! Before you just say, "why should I be the one to fix it?" think long and hard about what you want. Good friends aren't easy to come by and shouldn't be treated as expendable.

Forgive

One of the easiest ways to be forgiving towards your friends is to stop and consider how often people may have had to forgive you in order to stay friends with you. We all make mistakes and we all do things that have unintentionally upset or hurt someone else. When you forgive someone, the person who benefits most is – you.

Apologise

Making an apology can fix a friendship. If you feel you have hurt or upset someone even if you didn't mean to do it, apologise. An apology starts with "I" and does not include the word "but". Even if your apology doesn't fix the friendship you will feel better.

Be true to yourself

Don't let the meanness of others run your life. If you feel hurt or insulted by someone, you can either choose to act in mean ways towards that person or you can think about the sort of person you are and keep acting in the way you want to be. If you think you are a kind, caring, understanding, funny and trustworthy person keep being yourself.

When you need to change a friendship

If you have a friend who demands that you do everything that they say there may come a time when you want to change the relationship.

It is not a good idea to let other friends tell you who you can hang out with or what you should or shouldn't do.

Standing up for yourself and doing the things that you think are important is part of being true to yourself. This may come as a shock to your friend who is used to you agreeing with everything they say. At first they may threaten to end the friendship.

Even if they do end the friendship, you may want to ask yourself was it really much of a friendship if it relied on one person doing exactly what the other person other said.

Bullying

Finally don't be a bully and don't hang around with people think it is ok to bully others. Be kind to yourself by being friends with people who are prepared to see the best in other people- you'll have a happier life.

Andrew's most recent book is "*Unlocking Your Child's Genius*" (Finch, 2015).