

tips for teens & young adults



FRIENDSHIPS: Building a Good Life



Friends are people who:

- Want to spend time with you
- You can trust
- Help you be the best version of yourself
- Accept you for who you are

Friends make you feel:

- Respected and relaxed
- Listened to
- Like you belong
- Like you can try new things together

Friends don't:

- Ask you to do embarrassing things
- Get mad at you if you spend time with other people
- Make you feel uncomfortable around them
- Say, "If you are my friend, you would . . ."

Barriers & Challenges to Making Friends

➤ **Lack of opportunities to build a social network**

Youth who depend on adults to organize their activities, and/or clarify their communication often have fewer social opportunities. Youth who are separated from typical peers at school have fewer opportunities to build their network.

➤ **Fear of rejection**

Teens are not always kind to each other and feelings get hurt. Fear of rejection can result in avoiding even trying to connect with peers.

➤ **Fear of the unknown**

New situations or people can make you feel nervous or uncomfortable. Fear can make you hold back from forming relationships.

➤ **Skill development is needed**

Social skills do not develop naturally. Trusted adults can help you develop good social skills like asking questions, sharing information, resolving conflicts and being empathetic.

It is okay to have fears and need to develop skills . . . we all start somewhere. Let that fear motivate you to move forward!

What Can I Do to Overcome Barriers?

➤ **Create a Support System** of mentors who can help you build your competence and confidence in finding and making connections

➤ **Look for Places to Find New Friends** and get out there! Ask your support system for ideas about places where you can meet new people. Ask for support with transportation, with social skills and with emotions. Do not be afraid to spend time with people who are different than you.

➤ **Identify and Address Your Fears** around developing friendships—ask for help from your support system to recognize and deal with your emotions.

➤ **Build Skills** that you can use to turn acquaintances into friends—like ways to start a conversation, coping skills for difficult situations, understanding the thoughts and emotions of others.

Take a deep breath and think positively!

ELEMENT 1: Shared Activities

An important step in finding friends is to spend time with people to get to know each other.

What are some places where you can regularly get together with people who share your interests and activities?



Ideas from YOUTH LEADERS

- Sports (watching and participating)
- Paid or volunteer work and activities with your co-workers
- School (classes, study groups, after school clubs, activities, events)
- Your neighborhood with family, friends and neighbors
- Church/Temple
- Community gym, workout class, yoga

FRIENDS



ELEMENT 2: Shared Interests



Friendships can form when people find something in common to share; spend time together and get to know each other better.

What are you interested in?



Ideas from YOUTH LEADERS

- Talk about things in common: upcoming events, movies to see, music you like.
- Share your interests with others in a group and ask questions about their interests.
- Share your sense of humor and spend time laughing together.
- Invite others to participate with you in an event or just to hang out.
- Use social media to stay in touch.
- Once you feel comfortable with someone at school, work or club, ask them to join you outside that particular setting—suggest getting a bite to eat or connecting on social media.

One of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood.
~Lucius Annaeus Seneca

What Teens & Young Adults Can Do

ELEMENT 3: Valued Roles for All

Everyone wants to be valued and respected. We all have skills and talents that can be shared.

What would people who know you say about your skills and talents?



Ideas from **YOUTH LEADERS**

- Understand and accept differences in others.
- Treat people how they want to be treated.
- Help others and accept the help of others.
- Give everyone time to share their ideas.
- Be clear on the difference between friendship and romantic relationships/dating.
- Connect with others feelings and share your feelings.
- Be a leader, speak up if you have an idea about getting people together.
- Volunteer to help with a project or activity.



What Teens & Young Adults Can Do

ELEMENT 4: Share Information with Others



As you spend more time together with a group of people, ask people about their family, their school, their job.

What kind of information would you share when getting to know someone?



Ideas from **YOUTH LEADERS**

- Start by smiling, saying “hi” and be friendly from the start.
- Get to know people—listen and learn—then talk.
- Make the conversation fun by taking turns learning about each other.
- Don’t share personal information, like cell phone number or address, with anyone except family or trusted adults.
- Talk about what you like and dislike and ask them what they like or dislike
- Make sure you make your boundaries clear. If a conversation starts to make you uncomfortable or gets too personal, it is fine to move away or end it.
- Don’t rush into sharing personal, private details with someone in the hopes of becoming romantic partners.

What Teens & Young Adults Can Do

ELEMENT 5: *Just Enough Support from Adults*

Your needs for support change as you become more independent, but trusted adults will still be available to guide and support you. **EVERYONE** needs to rely on others at times.

What kinds of support do you need from trusted adults?



Ideas from YOUTH LEADERS

- Ask adults for guidance if you have concerns about a social media post.
- Ask adults to help you with transportation needs.
- Ask adults to support you to be safe as you learn to trust yourself and others.
- If you are trying to make friends and it feels like it just is not working, ask a trusted adult to help you think about what could make things better.
- Parents and trusted adults can provide an example of what friendships look like. Observe how the adults in your life treat their friends and colleagues.

What Teens & Young Adults Can Do

ELEMENT 6: *Reflection*

Friendships don't just happen—they take time and effort. It is best to plan carefully when developing friendships. It is important that the friends you have are kind, respectful and supportive.

Am I making an effort to reach out to others or am I waiting for friendships to just happen?



Ideas from YOUTH LEADERS

- Am I being positive and treating others with respect?
- Am I giving others time to talk and share their ideas?
- Do I know the difference between being friendly and looking for a relationship?
- Do I know how to ask others to join me for an activity outside of school or work?
- Have I asked others to help me?
- Do I know when I should shake hands, give hugs, or kiss someone? Am I too friendly too fast?

How To Maintain A Developing Friendship

Once you feel like there is a friendship developing, take it easy . . .

- Don't make others feel uncomfortable by visiting or hanging around too often.
- It's ok for the other person to not want to spend time together.
- Show your respect and acceptance of your new friend.
- Make decisions together about how you would like to spend your time together.
- Don't share your private conversations with others or talk about your friend when they are not there.
- No matter how badly you want a person to be your friend, if something doesn't feel right, don't do it.
- Watch for body language when you are together with your friend.
- If conflicts start, work on addressing them.
- Not every person who is kind or talks to you will become a romantic partner. There is a big difference between friends and partners. Be clear and honest with each other and respect your boundaries.



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