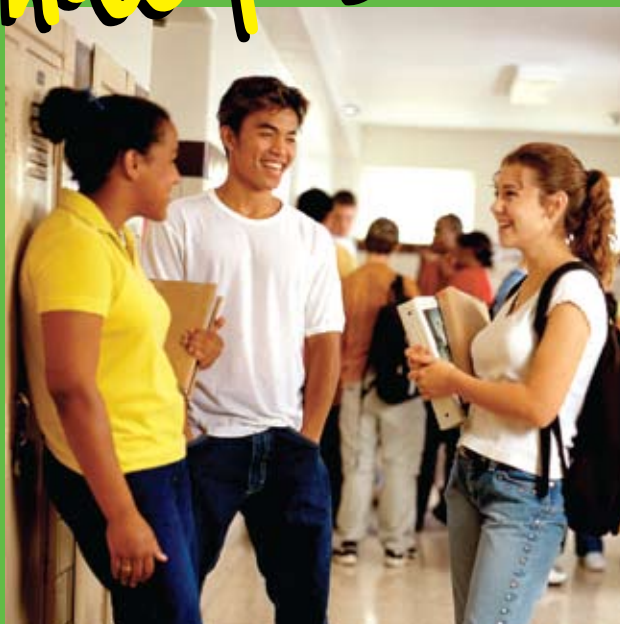


A Good Friend

How to make one,
how to be one



Do you ever feel left out? Tongue-tied? Lonely?

Here's what you can do to build
more and better friendships

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The Basics of Friendship

Everyone needs friends. Friends are a principal source of happiness and hope in our lives. However, the ability to make friends varies from person to person. To some people, making friends is easy, and to others it's very difficult.

This chapter takes a look at what makes good friendships and talks about how you can learn to make new ones or make your current ones better. Good friends can help you become a better person. They help you know and understand yourself. Friendship is one of the most precious gifts you can give.

How does friendship start? Most people don't think a lot about it, but friendships don't just happen. There is an intriguing process that takes place between people. Let's start at the basics and look at relationships more closely.

- ▼ *A true friend is one who knows all about you and likes you just the same.*

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Even though there are no rules or referees, no exact definitions or set formulas to human relationships, there are differences in the way we treat and feel about other people. We put people we know in three general categories: acquaintances, companions, and friends. What makes them different?

Acquaintances are people you see occasionally and perhaps say “hi” to or exchange small talk with. An acquaintance could be someone who rides the same bus as you, has a class with you, or works in the same place you do. Acquaintances also could include a bank teller who cashes your check, a waitress at your favorite restaurant, or a check-out clerk at a convenience store. Time spent around one another consists of brief encounters. You probably are pleasant to one another and get along okay, but there’s not much more to it than that. Nothing has ever happened to make the relationship develop or change for better or worse; it’s just there.

Companions, on the other hand, are closer to you because you share common experiences. You spend more time around these people than you do around acquaintances. You could be on the same sports team, share a locker at school, or be in a youth group together. You might work together, take the same classes in school, or live

in the same neighborhood. The things you do together are tied to a common interest; it's kind of like the glue that holds your relationship together. You might have fun doing things together. It's also possible that you might not like each other that much, but you frequently find yourself doing the same things.

Friends are the “real deal.” These are people you choose to spend a lot of time with. That's very different from the other two relationships.

Friends are special people because you do things for them as well as with them. Friends are there for the good times, bad times, and all the times in between. And having a “best friend” is wonderful.

Can these three relationships change? Of course they can. Sometimes a companion, or even an acquaintance, can become a friend. That's what makes friendship so exciting – just about anyone can become a friend.

Ten Rules for Friendship

Every person God put on this earth has a capacity to make friends – lots of friends. Unfortunately, most people never come close to reaching their “friendship potential.” Making friends is a skill. And the first step in developing that skill is knowing how to get along with

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others. Friends don't become friends overnight. Friendships take time.

People who are good at getting along with others take an interest in what other people like. They learn to develop interests that make them enjoyable to be around. Therefore, the more things you know how to do that involve interacting with other people, the more likely you are to make friends.

If someone were to list the Ten Rules for Friendship, the following should be included:

- ✓ Do things together.
- ✓ Be honest.
- ✓ Talk about ideas, hopes and dreams, fears and disappointments.
- ✓ Encourage one another to do what's right.
- ✓ Be trustworthy and trusting.
- ✓ Talk out problems and disagreements.
- ✓ Look out for one another.
- ✓ Listen carefully to one another.
- ✓ Comfort each other in down times.
- ✓ Have fun.

That's it. If you can follow these rules, you don't need to read any further. Being a good friend will be simple.

- ▼ *Everybody has to be somebody to somebody*
 - *to be anybody.*

But think for a minute. These rules aren't easy to live up to, are they? In fact, they are downright difficult. How many people do you know who treat others like that? Probably not many, or we wouldn't have all the problems we have today. We live in an imperfect world, and people have a habit of making others feel bad. So, before you put down this book, read a little more about what being a good friend is all about.

Let's look at Rule Number 10. It is listed last, but it may be the starting point for friendship. If you can have fun with someone, you set the stage for a deeper, more serious relationship to develop. It rarely happens in reverse. Having fun is a crucial element in friendship.

Having Fun Is No Joke

Having fun is healthy. It is a necessity; it keeps us emotionally fit, just as exercise keeps us physically fit. All people should relish the fact that they have the capacity to smile and laugh and feel good. And in the process, they can make others smile and laugh and feel good. That's pretty powerful. Other creatures can't enjoy life like we can; we're special.

Unfortunately, many people never reach their potential for having good, healthy fun with others. They shut other people out of their lives.

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Some kids turn to video games or TV for fun and spend most of their time alone. There's nothing wrong with video games and TV. But they shouldn't take the place of people. Some kids take needless risks, such as using alcohol or other drugs, because they believe that fun can be found artificially. That's sad. The healthiest fun is right in front of them – friendships with other people.

Some adults have a problem making friends, too. There are some sour, angry grown-ups out there who never found out what it takes to get along with other people. They are lonely, bitter, and negative. The time for you to learn how to enjoy friends is now.

Try to put the following tips into practice. Then you will learn how to enjoy life and have fun with others.

1 Realize your own goodness. That's the beginning. All change comes from within you. You have skills and talents that others can enjoy. You really do. You also have a basic need to like others and be liked in return. Now is the time to meet that need.

You are worthy and good inside. Some people just don't let others see their true goodness; for whatever reasons, they keep it hidden. And when they do that, they cannot share themselves with others.

Once you begin to trust your own goodness, doubts and bad feelings are doomed. You'll still make mistakes; that's normal. But that doesn't make you a bad person. Once you feel good about yourself, you will be enjoyable to be around.

So, step number one: Realize and believe with all your heart that you are a good person who has something to share with others.

▼ *You grow up the day you have your first real laugh – at yourself.*

2 **Develop a sense of humor.** If you are always serious, lighten up. A scowl and a frown are “red lights” to friendship; they'll quickly stop people from approaching you. A smile and a laugh are “green lights” to friendship and show people how friendly you can be.

Learn to laugh at yourself and your shortcomings. It will relieve some of the stress in your life. If you ever feel like poking fun at someone, let it be you, never anyone else.

Look on the bright side. Look for humorous situations. Learn to tell jokes. There are lots of books, tapes, and movies that are genuinely funny; others are real groaners, but sometimes they make you laugh, too. Collect funny stories

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or comic strips. Learn how to make puns and have fun with language. Try to do some impersonations of famous people. And remember that tackling problems with a positive attitude takes care of needless worries.

There are times, of course, when laughing and joking around are not appropriate. Never let your sense of humor be disrespectful or rude. Laughter is good medicine, but it should be used at the right times.

Smile, smile, smile. It makes people wonder what you've been up to. It also is a friendly, open behavior.

▼ *No one was ever blinded by looking on the
● bright side of life.*

3 **Respect the rights of others.** They have their opinions; you have yours. Different opinions are healthy. Life would be pretty boring if everyone thought alike. Please don't think other people are stupid for disagreeing with you. Let them say what they think. And remember: You deserve the same respect from them.

Learn how to listen to others without putting them down or trying to convince them that your opinion is right. It's fun to look at things from another angle.

The Basics of Friendship

Six important words – “I admit I made a mistake.”

Five important words – “You did a good job.”

Four important words – “What do you think?”

Three important words – “Can I help?”

Two important words – “Thank you.”

One important word – “We.”

4 Be kind. This doesn't mean you are a wimp; it takes a great deal of courage. Throughout your life, you will learn that if you are kind to others, they probably will be kind to you. Kindness is one of the links in the chain that holds people together.

Being kind is like planting flower seeds that one day will bloom and be enjoyed. Being unkind is like planting weed seeds that grow up and choke out all the beauty around you. Don't help the weeds grow; we have enough unkindness already. Instead, scatter as many seeds of kindness as you can. And make sure you take the time to enjoy the flowers that grow from them.

When should you start being kind? Right now. Help someone in need. Give someone a compliment. Open the door for someone. Wave to a friend. Encourage someone who is down. Say

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something positive. There are hundreds of little things you can do to show kindness.

You'll find that being kind is a profitable investment, one that pays big dividends. Not only will other people like you, but you'll also like yourself and feel good inside. That's the best of both worlds.

▼ *It's nice to be important – but much more important to be nice.*

5 Be empathetic. In other words, try to understand what others are going through. Look at life through their eyes. Remember times when you felt the same way, and remember how much it hurt. If you empathize and understand someone's feelings, you can help.

Friendships are fragile and require as much care in handling as other fragile and precious things.

6 Don't complain. People get tired of listening to constant whining. It accomplishes nothing except turning other people off. Life doesn't always go the way you want. Learn to accept what you can't change, and work hard to change what you can. Forget about the little things that bug you. Replace the time you used to spend complaining with time spent being kind.

7 Don't stop being friendly. Even if you are faced with negative, closed-minded people, never give up. Don't let them change you into one of them. Continue to be kind and friendly. Show them your goodness, and things will usually be okay.

Following these tips will help you have fun. You see, having fun isn't just laughing, playing, and joking around, although they are important. Having fun also means having a sense of enjoyment and pleasure.

Let's look at when and where you can put these ideas to use.

Meeting People and Making Friends

Getting along with others requires action. You can't sit back and hope that friends will fall from the sky. You have to get out and meet people. If you're shy, see the last chapter for tips.

The first step is simple. Go places that you enjoy, and do things that you like to do. In the process, you will meet others who enjoy similar interests. Having something in common means you will have more to talk about. Pick a time to "break the ice" with someone. Make it light and casual, like, "Do you come here a lot?" or "You're good at that." Improve your conversation skills.

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The next chapter contains many tips about improving your ability to talk with others.

It doesn't matter what your interests are. What is important is doing something that will help you meet other people. If you don't have a lot of interests that involve being with others, get busy. Find things that you're good at, and learn how to use them to meet other people. Get to know other kids by being involved in sports, music, clubs, church groups, and other extracurricular activities. It makes sense that the more people you meet and talk with, the more likely you are to find people who have the qualities you look for in a friend.

Keep reading. The next chapters contain other suggestions that will help you meet people and make friends.

- ▼ *Be kind to your friends. If it weren't for them, you'd be a total stranger.*