

Friendship

So you're interested in learning about friendship? You've come to the right place! Follow along to learn everything you need to know about the complex world of friends.

But first: the why. Why do we make friends?

Real friendship is having a genuine bond. Caring about one another, and bringing each other laughter, jokes and happy memories. Trust and honesty without judgment is vital. Some friends are there in the good times, but the best of friends are also there in the bad times. Whether they are a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on, they support us when times are tough. And we support them too. We care about our friends, and they bring out the best in us.

The relationships we have with each other are incredibly important. They can shape us, and the lives we live. Some of our best memories come from our time with friends, and they can teach us so much. Sounds great right? But remember it's not all sunshine and rainbows. There are a few things you must look out for even before you start to look for friends.

Choose your friends wisely. As a child, friendships are often made very quickly, as childish innocence and bravery allows us to bypass any barriers to friendship. However, as we grow, we should consider how easily we make friends with people and who we make friends with more carefully. The types of people you make friends with can help shape the decisions you make and the life you live. We see friends as examples. And the example they give is very important. Those that are bad influences can peer pressure and influence us into making bad decisions. Befriend those that make you a better person, and bring you joy. If you enjoy being around each other, it's a great sign of a brilliant friendship to come.

A simple guide to making friends:

1) Meeting each other

Friendships can grow from anything. Usually having things in common leads to friendships forming; anything from attending the same school to liking the same band can lead to that initial spark of friendship. Meeting people online is a great way to make new friends, because people with similar interests congregate so it's easier to find those that have the same interests as you. Also, you can meet all kinds of people from all over the world that you would never have met otherwise. However, it's a lot easier to lie about who you are online, so be careful who you trust. You must be very cautious with the information you share online and acknowledge that meeting friends face to face can be very dangerous. The great thing is that however and wherever people meet, there's an opportunity to make friends.

2) Feeling that spark

Before friendships can be formed, both parties must like each other. And what a complicated thing being liked is. First impressions are often misleading, and there's much to consider when meeting someone new. Make sure that you stay true to yourself, and don't pretend to be someone you're not to impress other people. Remember that not everyone gets along. If you find someone you don't enjoy being around, don't worry, it's normal. Once you find the right people, the seed of admiration is sown. The initial stages of a friendship are wonderful. They are filled with conversation and learning lots of new things. This is the perfect time to get to know each other.

3) Getting past the awkwardness

Finally, you must get past the awkwardness in order to make friends. From the first time approaching them out of your own accord to the first time going to their house, this is a period filled with new experiences, and so, of course, a lot of awkwardness. It's best to face this head on, and simply go for it. Overthinking these moments won't help anyone, and it's likely your new friend is feeling just as awkward as you are. There's nothing to worry about. In no time, you'll feel more comfortable around each other, and you'll look back on these awkward moments and laugh.

~ Friendship acquired. Well done! You have officially made a new friend. ~

Now what you must do is very important: keeping up the friendship. Try to do what's best for them. By supporting them, you create a safe and comfortable environment, where both you and your friend can thrive. Take time to be with them. Whether this is texting or meeting up, making time for them shows your friend you value them. Help them as much as you can, and always be sincere and trustworthy.

~ Danger. Warning: there are risks that come with friendships. ~

To be in a friendship is to open yourself up to someone new. With trust comes vulnerability. Friends often know our deepest thoughts, our greatest fears and our most guarded secrets. Sometimes friends make us laugh, but other times they make us cry. A betrayal between friends is a dishonour to the loyalty uniting them. It can cause great pain to everyone involved. To prevent this, be careful who you choose as a friend and always hold yourself to the same standards you hope your friend would follow too. Be dependable and responsible, and your friend is likely to return the favour.

You are not the same person as your friend. In fact, the differences between you are part of what make friendship so interesting. But this also means that there will be differences of opinions. There are bound to be disagreements between you, but don't be discouraged. This

is completely normal. Remember to attempt to understand things from your friend's point of view. Try to have rational and respectful conversations with them, and while it's important to state your case, it's also important to listen to them. Sometimes you will have to be flexible. A compromise may be the solution, so try to be open-minded.

Finally, remember the life cycle of a friendship is complex and varies. Changes in circumstances can change who we are friends with. There's nothing wrong with moving on from a friendship, and while changing friends can be nerve-wrecking, it's normal. Losing a friend hurts, but try to think back on the times you had together, and look forward to making new relationships with different people. Reflect on what you have learnt from this friend, and your friendship with them. Not all friendships can last a lifetime, so we must treasure the friends we have for the time we have them.

~ Reminder: Friendships in all shapes and sizes ~

There are many forms of friendship, between lots of different people. Some friendships are made simply by spending time together. Relatives can develop friendships. These relationships go beyond seeing each other at family reunions, and instead grow into a special companionship. Age is also no barrier in these relationships. Any member of the family can befriend each other, and some of the most unlikely friendships can become reality. Consider connecting with your family, and your bond may grow into a friendship too.

There are many factors that can affect who we make friends with, such as age and gender. While we tend to connect with those that are similar to us, we should celebrate our differences too. Making friends with someone completely different to you can be an interesting experience and can teach you both lots of new things.

Even countries have friends! Allyship between countries is a promise to support each other, particularly when times are tough. Friendships between humans are very similar; we seek out companionship in the same way. Perhaps somewhat less official than signed contracts.

Some people would consider their pets their friends. Pets can be brilliant companions and can bring us a lot of joy. Attachment is common between pets and their owners. Physical affection can make a massive difference. Holding or playing with a pet can bring comfort and happiness. Their unconditional love can provide a respite from complicated relationships with humans.

Not all friendships are the same. You may make many types of friends with different people. Different levels of intimacy can be achieved between any individuals, regardless of how long they have known each other or how often they spend time together. How close you are with your friends depends on who they are and the type of relationship you have. It's important to not compare friendships, and instead understand that all relationships evolve over time, and are unique.

By now, you have learnt about camaraderie, loyalty, and the joy of having a friend. You have even made a friend. But some aren't so lucky. Life without friends is a life riddled with loneliness. We take great comforts from companionship, and a lack of companionship rips away that comfort. We can all relate to the pain of loneliness, and there are some people who feel like this constantly. The isolation that comes with not having friends is suffocating. Why not reach out to someone who feels like this? A word or phrase could make someone's day. Who knows?

You might even make a new friend.