

Developing Our Friendships.

Relevant to: Depression:  Anxiety:  Irritability/Anger:  General emotional control: 

The human species is fundamentally a social one, so our relationships with others are extremely important.

The literature refers to 'investing in our social capital', and this is a good way of looking at it. It implies that we will nurture and develop relationships, and refrain from abusing and squandering them. There are certain concepts that appear time and again:

1. Conflict.

Just as friendships support and sustain us, conflict tends to do the reverse. Ongoing, long-term conflict especially has this effect. The implication is obvious: do what it takes to resolve the conflict. Use a problem-solving technique or ask advice from good friends or good family if you are all out of ideas yourself.

2. Isolation.

This can take several forms. Maybe you simply don't spend enough time with others. Or maybe you don't spend enough time with 'like-minded' others – people who make you feel 'a good and proper human being'. Maybe you haven't developed relationships with neighbours. Maybe you've not developed relationships at work, or wherever you spend your days. Maybe you're not close enough to your partner, or don't have a partner. If any of these apply to you then you are probably best to address it – nobody likes isolation.

TIP: sometimes you have to risk rejection to make contact with others. This is difficult – nobody likes rejection – but remember: It's better to be rejected by two people and gain a friend than to be rejected by nobody and gain nothing.

3. Change in Role.

For example, being a dependent teenager to being an independent adult. Being single to being married. Being a 'DINKY' to having kids. Having kids to kids have now left home. Being married to being separated, divorced or widowed. Having a job to being redundant. Being able bodied to being disabled. And so on.

Incredibly, there is nothing inherently 'wrong' with any of these transitions; a lot of people manage them perfectly well. On the other hand, plenty of people don't really manage them well.

TIP1: Be realistic about what you have lost in your old role – don't make it out to be better than it was.

TIP2: It's only natural to miss your old role, but don't let that blind you to the possibilities in your new situation. Remember: in a new situation you have to look for the possibilities – you've not been here before so you don't know yet where to find them. Look hard, get others who have been here to show you around.



Being a Good Friend.

1. Good friends are like gold dust. If you can be a good friend to others then you will always have friends, regardless of whether you are shy or outgoing, introvert or extrovert. You will have your own tips for this, but here are a few:
2. Be reliable, do what you say you'll do, when you say you'll do it.
3. Don't criticise or gossip about your friends behind their backs.
4. Nurture your ability to be pleased at others' success and happiness.
5. Be a friend in bad times as well as good.
6. Be a friend in good times as well as bad.
7. Most people dislike being contradicted, interrupted and disagreed with. If you think these things make for an interesting conversation, you're at odds with most people!
8. Spend time where you're happiest: if you're not a party-goer don't make yourself go to parties - watch TV with friends if that's what you prefer.
9. Be tolerant. Don't insist – even in your mind – that your friends follow the same great rules as you do.



In Session.

1. What else makes a good friend?

2. What do you need to do to be a better friend? (TIP: Write it down.)

3. What could you do to improve your social capital? Contact a specific person? Resolve a conflict? Discover new opportunities in your current situation? (TIP: Write it down.)

Project.

DO what you've identified above (and report back next time if you want to).

Mythbuster.

Some people are very self-sufficient – they don't need people.
NOT TRUE: everybody needs others, even if they are more self-sufficient than most. Members of some primitive tribes who have been cast adrift by the tribe as a punishment have been known to die as a result, through no physical cause, just isolation and distress.