

UNDERSTANDING

FRIENDSHIP

"It's not always easy"



THE **HOPE** LINE

Friends...

Friends are one of life's greatest blessings. They enrich our lives, keep us grounded during tough times, and even help us live longer. Studies show strong friendships are even linked to longer life expectancy! We are created to connect and build bonds with others.

But let's be real: while friendships are incredibly rewarding, they aren't always easy.

THIS GUIDE WILL TEACH YOU TO

Meet new friends

Turn acquaintances into true friendships

Build and maintain strong relationships

Heal broken friendships

Support your friends when they need you most



Making Friends

So you want to make new friends, but where do you even start? You can't build real connections just chilling at home binge-watching shows. At some point, you've got to step out into the real world—yeah, it might feel unpredictable or a little awkward at first, but that's where the good stuff happens.

FIRST... HERE'S WHERE TO FIND THEM

Volunteer

Serve at a soup kitchen, go on a mission trip, stuff envelopes for a campaign, or care for animals at a shelter. Working side-by-side toward a common goal builds friendships fast.

Join a Club

Book clubs, craft groups, chess clubs, dinner clubs—whatever you're into, there's a group of people who love the same thing.

Join a Local Sports Team

Competing together against an opponent is a fast way to bond.

Join a Church

There's no better place to connect with people who share your faith, values, and purpose.



Join a Gym

It's amazing how quickly you connect with others when you're working out together!

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

without feeling awkward...



Realize They Probably Feel Awkward Too.

Someone has to make the first move. Every time you meet new people, there's always a chance of rejection—but if you never take that risk, you'll never find the ones who think you're interesting and fun to be around. Every friendship starts with that awkward "getting to know you" phase—and that's totally normal.

Have a Few Go-To Conversation Starters.

It takes practice to feel natural at starting conversations, so begin with these simple openers:

- "What brings you here today?"
- "Where are you from?"
- "I love your jacket—where'd you get it?"

Know What's Going On In The World.

Stay up to date on news, entertainment, and pop culture. It gives you more to talk about. Have something interesting ready to share, like: "I saw the funniest thing yesterday—did you catch it?" Then tell them what you saw or heard.

Remember, It's Not About You.

This may be the most important tip for two reasons. First, you don't want to come across as someone who only talks about themselves. Second, people feel valued when you show genuine interest in them. Keep the conversation focused on them. Ask lots of questions, pick up on what they mention, and follow up to learn more.

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Initiate More Get-Togethers!

You can join every club or team out there, but you'll never truly make friends unless you have the courage to invite someone to hang out again. **Don't always wait for others to reach out first. Be the one who extends the invitation.** It's easy to say, "We should do this again sometime," but real connection happens when you follow through with an actual plan. Set a date, choose an activity, and make it happen. Invite them to see a new movie or catch your favorite band in town. Most people love being asked to join in—they just need someone to take the first step.

Turn Acquaintances Into **FRIENDS**

Some people have many acquaintances but very few true friends. A friend and an acquaintance are not the same. An acquaintance is someone you might see often and chat with, but the conversation usually stays light and surface-level. If you want a good friend, someone you can eventually trust, confide in, and rely on, you have to go deeper than quick greetings and casual small talk.





TIPS FOR MOVING FROM ACQUAINTANCE TO FRIEND

Treat people the way you would want to be treated.

Use their name every so often, make eye contact, and lean in a little when they're talking instead of looking around or getting distracted. Be generous with sincere compliments. Everyone wants to feel seen and heard.

Don't worry about who always makes the plans.

As long as your new friend keeps saying yes, it doesn't matter who reaches out first or suggests the next hangout. Some people just aren't natural initiators. If you enjoy their company, keep inviting them.



Be Reliable

If you say you'll do something, follow through and do it. If you can't, be honest—give them a call, explain why, and apologize. Nobody likes being disappointed or left hanging.

Smile!

Happiness is contagious! People love being around those who bring joy and laughter. Nobody wants to spend much time with a downer.

Show that you care.

Show people you care by noticing when they seem down or have been missing from shared activities like clubs, the gym, or church. Reach out with a call to check if they're sick or struggling, then offer support and help however you can. Stay connected—every time they cross your mind, send a quick text or handwritten note.



Be Considerate

Do people favors without expecting anything in return. If you're grabbing coffee for yourself, ask if anyone else wants one. When a coworker looks overwhelmed, offer to lighten their load in a small way. If someone's facing stress, send flowers, drop off a treat, or bring a meal. Being generous and considerate will make people truly appreciate you.

We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over, so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over." — Ray Bradbury



Keeping Friends

There's a lot of truth in the saying, **"To have a great friend, you must first be one."**

Whether you're hoping to strengthen your own friendships or simply understand what makes a trustworthy friend, it starts with learning what genuine friendship looks like. So, what does it take to be a good friend?

HOW TO BE A GREAT FRIEND!

1. BE REAL!

People are turned off by those who constantly try to be someone they're not. We're most comfortable around authentic people. It's okay to be vulnerable. Acknowledge your strengths and faults with humility and confidence. This gives others permission to be real and relaxed around you too.



2. BE A GOOD LISTENER!

We all need someone who will truly listen as we talk through our feelings. Everyone has a deep desire to feel seen, heard, and understood. When you make your best effort to listen well, your friends will naturally want to be around you more. They'll see you as someone who genuinely cares.

3. MAKE TIME FOR YOUR FRIEND.

Make time for your friends. Time is one of the greatest gifts we have, and when we share it, we're giving something truly meaningful. Friendships don't grow overnight—they take time, care, and consistent presence.



4. KEEP THEIR SECRETS.

Show yourself to be a trustworthy friend, someone who can be counted on to protect their secrets as carefully as your own. One of the best ways to build that trust is by being open enough to share some of your own with them.

5. ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIEND!

Everyone needs encouragement. Look for thoughtful ways to lift your friend up and highlight the qualities that make them special. When you remind them how much you value who they are, it deepens their trust in you and strengthens your friendship.



6. WORK THROUGH CONFLICT.

Be willing to work through conflict. Every relationship faces challenges from time to time. Show your friend that you're committed to navigating misunderstandings and hurt feelings together, instead of walking away when things get hard.

7. BE LOYAL.

Loyalty means standing by your friend with unconditional acceptance, even when they make mistakes or completely mess up. Be present for them in both their highest highs and lowest lows. Don't just promise to be there; show it by laughing with them, crying with them, and sharing life's moments side by side.



8. TAKE CARE OF YOUR FRIEND.

When you see your friend heading into a dangerous situation, whether it involves drugs, alcohol, or a harmful relationship, have the courage to step in. Care enough to protect them from the damage you can see coming, even if it means having a difficult conversation.

“True friends aren't the ones who make your problems disappear. They are the ones who won't disappear when you're facing problems.” - Unknown





FRIENDSHIP RED FLAGS

Struggling to keep good friends? You might be falling into one of these unhealthy patterns. Be honest with yourself. Sometimes a change is exactly what you need.

1. Complaining Too Much

If you're always venting about your job, money, or how unfair life is, people will eventually start to tune out. Complaining gets old quickly and can make others hesitant to spend time with you.

2. Disappearing When You're in a Relationship

It's great to enjoy time with someone new, but if you drop your friends every time you start dating, they'll stop reaching out. Keep a healthy balance between your romantic life and the friends who've always been there for you.

3. Being Too Self-Focused

Friendship works both ways. If the conversation always centers on your problems or preferences, your friends may begin to feel unheard. Show the same interest and support you hope to receive.

4. Stirring Up Drama

If you gossip, exaggerate, or create tension to get attention, it will eventually damage your relationships. Trust and honesty go much further than manipulation.

5. Keeping Score

Counting who paid last, who called first, or whose turn it is to choose plans takes the fun out of friendship. Good friends give freely without keeping tally.

6. Getting Jealous Easily

If you can't celebrate a friend's good news—a promotion, a new car, a relationship—your envy will eventually show. Genuine friends cheer each other on.

7. Acting Like a Bully

Bossing friends around, mocking, or making demands can push people away. Even if you don't mean harm, respect and kindness are essential for lasting friendships.



Healing Broken Friendships

Every relationship hits rough patches now and then. Sometimes those challenges actually make friendships stronger. So don't walk away just because things get difficult. Do your best to make peace and work through it. After all, a true friend is priceless.

5 TIPS FOR MENDING A BROKEN FRIENDSHIP

1. Talk Things Through

This is the most important first step. **Don't ignore the conflict or hope it will disappear on its own.** Ask how they're feeling and give them the space to share openly while you truly listen. Avoid interrupting or defending yourself right away; focus on understanding their perspective. The more you can empathize with what they're experiencing, the better chance you'll have of resolving the issue. Once they've finished talking, repeat back what you heard to make sure you understood correctly. For example, you might say, "So you're upset because what I said came across as unkind—did I get that right?" This helps ensure you're both on the same page.





2. Don't Get Defensive

Don't rush to react when your friend shares what they think you did wrong. **It's natural to want to defend yourself, but try to resist that urge.**

Instead, focus on listening and ask what you can do to help mend the relationship. Remember, you'll have your turn to share your side later. Listening doesn't mean you agree. It simply shows that you care enough to understand their perspective.

3. Ask What You Can Do to Help

Often, your friend will have an idea of what they'd like you to do to make things right. At that point, you can decide whether their suggestion is something you're truly willing and able to do. Keep in mind that an upset friend might propose a solution that's unrealistic or unfair. Don't make promises you can't keep. For instance, if they say, "I never want you to talk to my boyfriend again," that's not reasonable. You might respond with, "I don't think I can do exactly what you're asking, but here's what I can do." Finding a fair middle ground is often the best way to restore peace and rebuild trust.

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

- Colossians 3:13



4. Be Willing To Say You're Wrong

If you realize you've truly done something wrong, take full responsibility for it. A simple "I'm sorry" isn't enough if the words feel hollow. Back them up by showing you mean it and committing to change. Clearly ask your friend to forgive you, and wait to hear their "I forgive you" before assuming things are okay. Even then, rebuilding trust takes time, so consistently demonstrate reliable behavior moving forward.

5. Give It Time

If your friend isn't ready to talk about what's upsetting them, sometimes you just need to give it time. **Patience is key—keep showing love and support, even if they're not responding yet.** One friend may need to keep making the effort, even when it feels one-sided. Do your best to seek peace, but remember you can't force someone else to meet you halfway.

Chat with a
Hope Coach



These are tough conversations to have! If you need help working through your situation with your friend, more advice and support is available at thehopeline.com/live-chat.

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SUPPORTING YOUR FRIENDS

WHEN THEY'RE GOING THROUGH STRUGGLES

Being a good friend means sticking by them through their struggles, even when it's tough. It can be painful to watch someone you care about make poor choices and face the fallout, especially when they won't listen to your advice. If you want to truly help, here are some practical tips for supporting your friend.



LISTEN

Unless your friend feels truly heard and understood, they won't trust the advice you offer. Take time to understand their perspective—ask questions to show you genuinely care. Then summarize what you've heard, like, "So what I hear you saying is... Is that right?"

ENCOURAGE

Before jumping into advice, start by encouraging your friend. Without that first step, they might be so stuck in negativity that they feel hopeless and unable to act on your suggestions. **Encouragement opens the door to hope and makes them more receptive.** Find something genuine to affirm, like a past success, their potential, or phrases such as: "Admitting your struggle was a brave first step," "You sound ready to make positive changes," "You're not alone," or "I'm here for you, and others are too."



ADVISE

The best way to give advice is to **INVOLVE** them in figuring out what to do while you **INFLUENCE** their thinking in a positive direction.

INVOLVEMENT

People commit to advice when they help shape it, not when it's just talked at them. Guide them to their own conclusions so they own the decision and follow through.

- Ask what they've already tried to improve things and why it worked (or didn't).
- Ask what else they think might help.
- Share one of your own suggestions and ask what they think of it.

INFLUENCING

As they brainstorm ideas, steer them toward better ones (or away from risky ones) with thoughtful questions like:

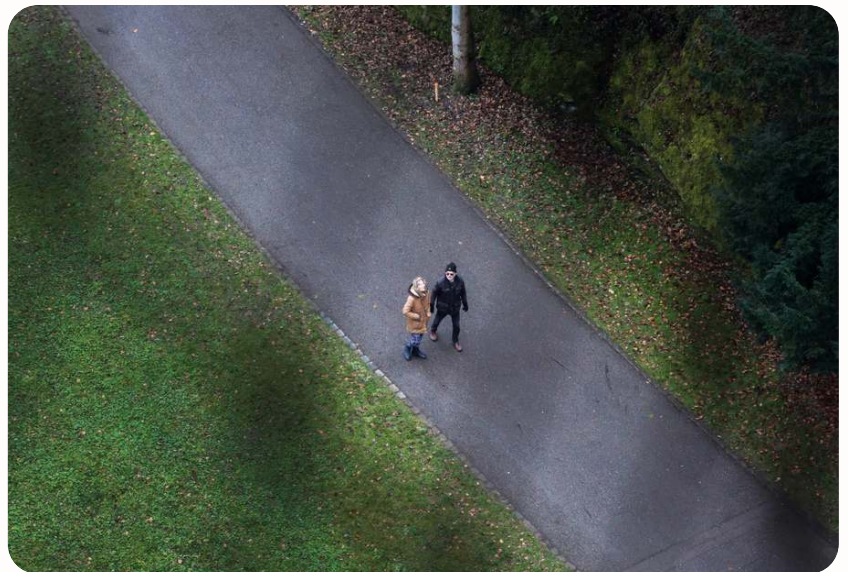
- "What do you think would happen if you tried that?"
- "How would you feel afterward?"
- "Why do you see that as a good option?"



PRAY

With God's power, anything is possible. Any situation can be resolved, any addiction broken, any heart healed, and any wrong made right. It may not happen immediately or in the way we expect, but God invites us to bring our requests to Him.

So pray—and let them hear you pray!





LEARN MORE

If your friend is struggling with a particular issue, take time to learn as much as you can about it. [TheHopeLine's library of free downloadable guides](#) is a great place to start, and you can also share those resources with a friend who needs support.

THINGS TO AVOID

WHEN GIVING ADVICE TO YOUR FRIENDS

BEING JUDGMENTAL

Nobody will open up to you if they feel judged. You don't know what they've been through. Give them the benefit of the doubt.

PREACHING

Don't just talk at someone. Preaching feels like you care more about being right than about them. Instead, involve them in the discussion with plenty of questions and active listening.

OFFERING A SOLUTION TOO QUICKLY

It's important to fully understand what they're struggling with, their perspective, and what they've already tried to fix it. They may have been battling this for a long time and putting in real effort. Saying "Just do this and it'll all be better" minimizes their struggle and makes them feel unseen and unheard.

GOSSIPING

Gossiping destroys trust. If they fear you won't keep their confidence, they'll never open up to you.

BELIEVING IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIX THEM

It's not your job to fix their problems. Just be a safe space where they can talk openly, find support, and gain a fresh perspective on their situation.

A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

When God created Adam, He declared, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18 NIV). **From the very beginning, God designed us for relationship**—first with Eve, and by extension, with others.

God knows how vital friendships are and wants us to experience truly great ones. Jesus commands, “Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:12-13 NIV). Friendships should bring joy—“A sweet friendship refreshes the soul” (Proverbs 27:9b MSG)—and strength: “Two people are better off than one... A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12 MSG).



THE HOPELINE

THE BIBLE IS YOUR GUIDE

Scripture shows us how to be a great friend: “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality... Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others” (1 Peter 4:8-10 NIV). “Encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV). Imagine friendships marked by this kind of mutual love, just as God intended.

God also warns us about their influence: “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character’” (1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV). “Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble” (Proverbs 13:20 NLT).

Above all, Jesus—the Son of God—longs to be your friend. He loves you deeply and will never leave you. In seasons of loneliness, turn to Him: “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18 NIV).

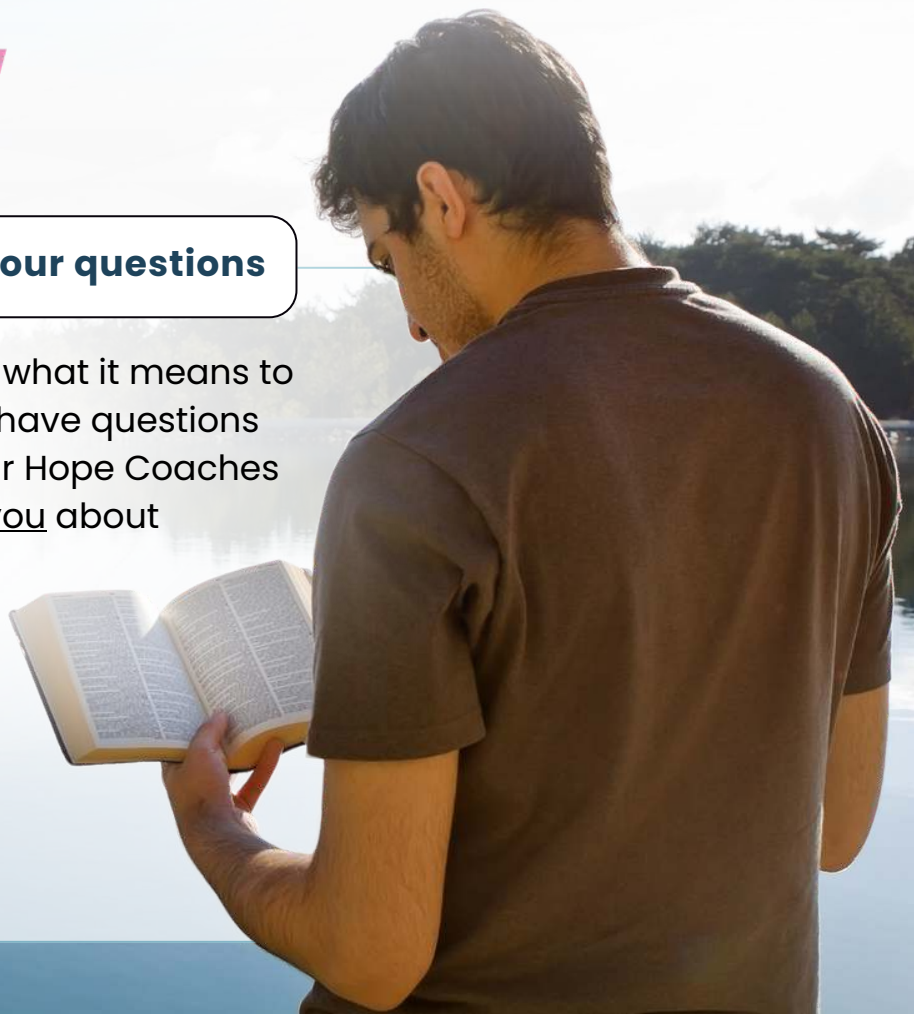


Talk with someone about your questions

If you want to know more about what it means to have a relationship with God or have questions about the topic of self-worth, our Hope Coaches are available 24/7 to [chat with you](#) about whatever is on your mind.



← **CHAT
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A HOPE
COACH**



THE HOPE LINE

Our mission is to help students and young adults in crisis by offering sound advice and a safe place to connect. Through our online resources and the ability to chat live with a Hope Coach 24/7, we are here to help people make a true connection.

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