

SERIES E: Topic 2

Keeping Friends

Having friends you feel close to makes you feel better about yourself. The absence of friends can lead you toward temptation and depression and dull your imagination, ambition and self-esteem.

> **A true friend is one who will do whatever it takes to make the other person feel good physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, and to show complete trust, forgiveness, acceptance and support for that person's well being and future.**

Statistics show that people who have good friends live longer than those who don't.

> **Making someone else important to you is usually the best way to become important to them.**

Ideas for Improving Your Friendship Skills

Praise regularly—never pass up a chance to say something to other people that will make them feel better about their lives or what they are doing. Practice with everyone.

Take risks—nobody connects every time in trying to get to know someone better. We all get rejected sometimes.

Gain awareness—when something you say doesn't go over well, ask for clarity with a question like, "Something I said seems to have bothered you. Did I offend you?"

Be happy—people like being around people who are happy. Are your words and manner upbeat or depressing?

Listen—you can't influence other people unless you know how they think, and you can't learn if you aren't listening.

Give support—loyal friends help pull us through dark moods and self-pity. Who could use your help right now?

Be encouraging—criticism erodes a person's confidence; praise builds it. Encourage everyone.

Be tactful—let people adopt your ideas instead of trying to "sell" them. Help others draw their own conclusions instead of pushing them toward your viewpoint.

Use discretion—offer advice only when asked. Most people interpret unwanted advice as criticism and don't appreciate it. People are more likely to seek your counsel if they admire the way you are handling your own problems.

Smile—smile at others with your voice and body language, and they will smile back.

Be open—you encourage others to open up around you when you reveal your feelings. Also, make others feel they can offer advice without hurting your feelings.

Spend time—the amount of time you spend with a person is a good gauge of his importance to you.

Respect yourself—people can sense if you don't seem to like or respect yourself. Whether you realize it or not, your insecurity sends a message to others about how they should view you. Don't teach others to discount you.

Have a sense of humor—you can make others feel comfortable around you by dealing with disappointments and shortcomings with a good sense of humor.

Be trustworthy—always, and without being asked, keep the secrets and private thoughts of others to yourself.

Control your ego—pride issues are difficult to see in yourself and could limit your circle of friends.

Be presentable—if you don't maintain your appearance, you could be drawing negative attention to yourself.

Be generous—bring to your relationships at least as much as you are getting out of them.

Except when you receive sudden and devastating news, how you feel comes from how you think; not the other way around. Pleasant thoughts make you feel good; bad thoughts make you feel bad. The more you think it's okay to be unpleasant because of your misfortune or how hard you have had to work, the more you damage your relationships and make yourself feel bad.

> *Every time you have an angry thought, an unkind thought, a sad thought, or a cranky thought, your brain releases chemicals that make you feel bad.*
>
> —Daniel G. Amen, M.D.



ASK YOURSELF

Does my Plan for life set aside enough time to find, develop and maintain friendships?

Do I have a true friend?

How do I let him/her know?

Which friendship would I most like to repair?

How good a friend am I to my family members?