

Developing Healthy Relationships

Based on the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie

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Having good friends is really important for our health and happiness. People with strong friendships feel like they belong, feel better about themselves, and are happier in life. They also don't feel as lonely. Sometimes, it's hard to make friends. We might worry that if we show our true selves, people will judge us or not like us. Some of us are shy or don't feel confident. Others might have social anxiety, which makes it scary to talk to new people. When we feel this way, we might try to hide by not looking at people, always checking our phones, or not joining in group activities. Learning to make friends can be scary, but it's also very rewarding. The good news is that anyone can learn how to make friends. Knowing what to do can help us start building lasting friendships. Here are three ways to make strong friendships that last:



1. Don't criticize others - How do you feel when someone criticizes you? Not very good, right? When we criticize others, it makes it hard to be friends with them. If we criticize people, they might want to criticize us back. This is called the "Law of Giving Back" - people often treat us the same way we treat them. Criticizing also makes people want to defend themselves. They might feel hurt or angry, and this can damage the friendship. Instead of criticizing, try to understand others. Think about how they see things, even if it's different from how you see them. Just like you want others to understand you, you should try to understand them too.

2. Show real appreciation - The best way to make someone want to be your friend is to make them feel good. When we show real appreciation, it tells others that we value and respect them. It makes them feel important to us. Everyone needs to feel appreciated. It helps us feel good about ourselves. But be careful not to confuse appreciation with fake compliments. Only honest appreciation works. When you appreciate someone's ideas or efforts, you make their life better, and you'll feel better too.

3. Listen carefully - Listening to others is a great way to build strong friendships. It shows that we care about what they think and feel. To really listen, put aside your own thoughts for a while and focus on the other person. Turn off your phone and other distractions. Show that you're listening by making eye contact, nodding, and using facial expressions like smiling or frowning. You can also lean forward a bit to show you're interested. Try not to interrupt when someone is talking. If you need to, only interrupt to ask questions that help you understand better. Remember not to criticize what they're saying, even if you disagree. Instead, try to understand how they feel and what they want. This builds trust and helps you connect better.

The Golden Rule of Friendship

While these tips won't make everyone your best friend, they will help you improve your friendships and make new ones. Remember the Golden Rule: treat others the way you want to be treated. This is

also called the "law of giving back". If you want others to be kind to you, appreciate you, and listen to you, you should do the same for them first.

Making friends takes time and effort, but it's worth it. Good friendships make our lives better in many ways. They give us support when we need it, make us laugh, and help us grow as people. By using these tips and being patient, you can build strong, lasting friendships that will bring joy to your life for years to come. (639)