



Ten “Tried and True” Behaviors to Foster Strong Social Ties

Behavior	Explanation	Cautionary Advice
Express interest in those with whom you might share an interest	Think of three diverse questions you can ask anyone in any situation that could lead to a conversation that would be of interest to you too. Books, food, movies, music, sports, exercise, vacation destinations, pets, hobbies and the more pleasant aspects of life can be good topics to start unless you genuinely gravitate to more controversial subjects. By all means then, test their tolerance for those up front.	Resist any temptation to take over the conversation or to twist it to talking just about you. Your goal is to learn as much as possible about the other person. You want to find out if they are a good fit for you and your social needs. Don't expect one person to meet all of your needs but having someone to genuinely connect with on any level can chip away at loneliness.
Be prepared to communicate your needs clearly and encourage others to be open with you	Everyone communicates directly (verbally, written or in some physical form) and indirectly (silence, body language). The clearer you are in safely stating your desires, interests, needs, boundaries, restrictions, the less the other person has left to figure out. Watch for resistance in others- it is a sign of perceived force. Mutual relationships are founded on a shared desire to minimize power differentials.	Before you communicate your needs, be clear on what those needs really are. Start first with things that are truly non-negotiable for you. It is our differences that create the biggest challenges in relationships. What compromises can you live with and which ones will you be unwilling to make? There is no need for justification, simply clarity so others can choose whether you are a good fit for them.
Initiate outings and/or invite people over to your home	Relationships are something we do, not something we have. In a healthy relationship, however casual, both people need to share a responsibility for developing and maintaining it. The process of a relationship takes work and requires a splitting of the energy required to keep it going. That means taking initiative at least some of the time and carrying the load. This does not mean trying to force people to do things they do not want to do. Coercion undermines connection.	One of the easiest ways to show people that you think and care about them is to issue an invitation to do something together. More specifically, something that would primarily benefit or interest them and would require nothing of them except a reply to the invitation. This means that they are not expected to spend money, bring something to share or be responsible for arranging anything beyond their transportation to meet up with you.
Respond promptly, decisively and politely to any invitations you receive	When someone asks you to join them to do something, be honest with yourself about your desire to do it. Once you have decided to accept or decline, promptly and politely communicate your response-either enthusiastically say yes or apologetically say no. A justification for the latter is not required but genuine gratitude for the invitation is. Remember, the goal of a mutual relationship is to avoid both forcing others to do things and feeling forced to do things. Intimacy and attachment arise from a series of genuinely consensual experiences.	There is nothing worse than issuing an invitation and having common, frustrating responses to it: (1) Receiving no acknowledgement and no response at all (2) Receiving a delayed acknowledgement accompanied by an uncertainty or conditionality about one's availability to accept the invitation. To those guilty of these actions let me suggest that you learn to quickly acknowledge, express appreciation and decline if you are not interested. If for any reason you are in doubt, absorb the responsibility for the commitment and count yourself out. Either way, be clear in your communication.

Learning to live an uplifting life-How to lure yourself and lead others out of loneliness (Part 3 of 3)

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Keep the commitments you make and be present for them	Once you have arranged or accepted an invitation to a social activity, keep your commitment. That means planning around it and being prepared to decline an alternate activity. Changing your mind after accepting an invitation, creates inconvenience for others, whether they want to admit it or not. Commitments are a reflection of care and concern. Abandoning them is not. When you show up, remember to engage with people not your phone.	There are two reasons that commitments can become a problem for people. First, they are uncomfortable declining invitations in the first place. They make commitments as a way of deferring the decision to decline. Second, they are so excited about the prospect of doing something fun, they forget to check whether it will fit within the constraints created by other commitments. Again, honor others and the energy it takes for them to organize and issue invitations.
Show up on time so people are not forced to wait for you and leave before the very end so others are not left to wait on you	Keeping a commitment means that you make every attempt to fulfill the expectations of the invitation as issued and/or clearly intended. If there is a stated start and end time, respect them. If you have agreed to bring something or do something specifically requested or that you offered, follow through on it. Do not bring guests or others unless there was express permission to do so. Do not ask to include others but do clarify if others (e.g. spouse, kids, pets) are to be included	There are reasons people offer for missing an event or arriving late. Any reasonable person understands and will accept an apology for unforeseen and uncontrollable events. That said, issues like traffic and weather can to some degree be anticipated and managed. Fatigue and feeling sick as it relates to poor choices can also be avoided. It is not necessary to adjust your behaviors except to stop making commitments that you know you are not willing to make every effort to keep.
Expression appreciation and gratitude on regular basis and celebrate the successes of others	Whenever you experience the sensation of gratitude, take a moment to pause and really enjoy it. Gratitude is a powerful emotion. When it occurs in response to an experience with another person, let them know how you feel. Alternatively, every now and again, think about what your life would be like without your family and friends in it. Take pride in their successes and express support. If you feel envious, emulate them and continue to include them.	Being thanked for doing something or being a certain way can be incredibly validating. It is a simple way to serve as a reminder to both people that the relationship itself matters. So is a show of support when things are going well for others. A slogan to remember to do this is... If you feel something positive, say something pleasant or do something nice. If you can't, keep quiet and contemplate why not.
Offer specific support when you see someone is struggling	Asking for help is hard for many people. Offers of support can be hard to accept if they are general and in turn, require a request for specific assistance. Instead offer something specific- bring dinner over, watch the kids, walk the dog, drive to an appointment, keep someone company-whatever might be obviously needed.	Sometimes offers of support can be more burdensome than helpful. The point is to provide an opportunity for someone to accept support if it would be helpful. Just remember it is about them, not you. Don't force anything. If you detect resistance, back off but let them know your offer of support will remain open.
Do not request an evenly split check if you stand to gain from the transaction	Whether you are out with one person or a group of people in any situation that requires a payment for participation, take it upon yourself to pay your fair share and encourage others to do so too. By suggesting an even split when you know you are getting more than one what you paid for, you are forcing others to pay more than their fair share. Do not make others take responsibility for you or have to be the one to resist your request.	I never accept invitations to paying events that I cannot easily afford in case I am on the receiving end of a situation in which I am asked to contribute more than my fair share. It is not that I excuse the behavior but I have come to expect it. However, I will not agree to an even split if I stand to benefit. In those situations, I make sure that split checks are handled fairly. Never assume others can, or want, to pay for you unless they offer in advance.

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Give small “gifts” that reflect your understanding of who others are and that reminds you of them	This suggestion is for those who have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings in spoken or written words. Simple gifts can be construed as gestures to convey that the other person is in your thoughts and is important to you in some way. I used to love it when my kids were young and would bring me a jar of dandelions they had picked from the backyard. I also liked it when I traveled for business and came home to discover that my husband had taken my car in to get cleaned inside and out. To know that someone is thinking about you, that you matter to them, is what attachment is all about.	The goal here is not to burden you with finding a way to impress someone with your purchasing power but rather to realize how receiving any acknowledgement of your awareness of another person’s value is always welcome. My run partner tests out recipes and omits the potatoes and raw tomatoes (I am allergic) so she can share the leftovers with me. She also carries a spare teabag in her run belt in case our weekly stop at Starbucks reveals that they are out of my favorite tea. Those little gestures convey a lot. If someone gives you a gift, perhaps even an unwelcome one, and their intentions are clearly well meaning, please accept it graciously regardless of what you do with it.

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