

# YOUR GUIDE TO MAKING TRUE FRIENDS

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# Table of Contents

1. 10 Tips to Make New Friends

2. How to Make Small Talk with Anyone in 5 Easy Ways

3. How to Have More Best Friends in Life: My Heartfelt Guide

4. The Secret To Meaningful, Fulfilling Social Relationships (How to Remove Social Anxiety)

5. ABOUT

# 10 Tips to Make New Friends

## 10 Tips to Make New Friends

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*"Hi Celes, I have a small group of friends as I'm a shy person. I'm not really **confident** enough to go out and meet new people. I would like some advice on how I can meet new people and get more friends." - John*

Making new friends can be intimidating, but it's definitely rewarding.

After all, friends form a big part of our life for most of us. They are the ones who walk through life together, share our ups and downs, and pains and joys. Without friends, life wouldn't be the same at all. We wouldn't be who we are if not for them.

If you are looking to make new friends, you have to get clear on what kind of friends you want to make. Broadly speaking, there are **3 types of friends**:

1. **"Hi-Bye" friends** (or acquaintances). These are the ones you see at school/work because the context calls for it. You say hi when you see each other and you say bye at the end of the day, but that's about it. The relationship never lasts when the context is removed, i.e., when you graduate from school or leave the workplace.
2. **Regular friends**. Social, activity buddies you meet up every now and then to catch up or hang out with. You can generally talk about regular topics under the sun.
3. **True, soul friends** (or best friends). People you can talk anything and everything with. You may or may not meet up every day, but it doesn't matter as the strength of your friendship is not determined by how frequently you meet up — it's more than that. These are the friends you can trust to be there for you whenever you need them, and they will go the extra mile for you.

Most of us are looking to make regular friends and if possible, true, soul friends. We probably have a lot of hi-bye friends — more than we can count. The ratio of my hi-bye friends, normal friends, and true, soul friends is about 60-30-10%. Over the years as I meet more and more people, it has become more like 75-20-5%. I suspect it's about the same for other people too, with a variance of about 5-10%.

No matter whether you just want to make normal or best friends, you can do that. You may not believe it, but I was a very quiet and secluded girl back during my primary and secondary school years. When I was in junior college, I maintained this seclusive lifestyle, though I began to speak up more. Entering university and later on P&G (my ex-company) made me more sociable. Today I run my blog and coach others through 1-1 coaching and workshops where I share a lot of my life to others. If the younger me had wondered what I would be like in the future, I wouldn't never have thought that I would be as outward and expressive as I am today.

If you take a look at the people out there who seem to make friends easily, they were probably seclusive themselves at some point. Their social skills were likely all picked up over time. For this same reason, you can learn to become more sociable through time and practice.

Here are my 10 personal tips to get new friends:

## 1. Realize your fear is in your head

The first step is to develop a healthy mental image of meeting new people. Some of us see meeting new people as a scary event. We are concerned about making a good impression, whether the other person will like us, how to keep the conversation going, and so on. The more we think about it, the scarier it seems. This initial apprehension develops into a mental fear, which takes a life of its own and unknowingly blocks us from making new friends. Shyness toward others is actually a result of fear.

Actually, all **these fears are just in our head**. If you think about it, 99% of people are too busy being concerned about these very things themselves to pay attention to you. While you're worried

about the impression you make, *they* are worried about the impression *they* will make. Truth be told, they are just as scared as you are. The remaining 1% are people who recognize that a relationship is built on way stronger values than specific words or things said/done during just one encounter. Even if there are people who do judge you based on what you do/say, are these people you want to be friends with? I think not.

## 2. Start small with people you know

If you haven't been socializing much, meeting a whole bunch of new people may seem intimidating. If so, start small first. Lower the difficulty of the task by starting off with your inner circle of friends, i.e., people you are more familiar with. Some ways to do that:

- **Reach out to acquaintances.** Have any hi-bye type friends from earlier years? Or friends you lost touch with over time? Drop a friendly SMS and say hi. Ask for a meetup when they are free. See if there are opportunities to reconnect.
- **See if there are cliques you can join.** Cliques are established groups of friends. The idea isn't to break into the clique, but to practice being around new friends. With cliques, the existing members will probably take the lead in conversations, so you can just take the observatory role and watch the dynamics between other people.
- **Get to know your friends' friends.** You can join them in their outings or just ask your friend to introduce you to them. If you are comfortable with your friends, there's a good chance you will be comfortable with their friends too.

- **Accept invitations to go out.** I have friends who rarely go out. When asked out, they reject majority of the invites because they rather stay at home. As a result, their social circles are limited. If you want to have more friends, you have to step out of your comfort zone and go out more often. You can't make more friends in real life if you stay at home!

### 3. Get yourself out there

Once you acquaint yourself more with your inner circle of friends, the next step will be to extend to people you don't know.

- **Join meetup groups.** [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com/) is a great social networking site. There are many interest groups, such as groups for entrepreneurs, aspiring authors, vegetarians, board-game lovers, cycling enthusiasts, etc. Pick out your interests and join those groups. Meetups are usually monthly depending on the group itself. Great way to meet a lot of new people quickly.
- **Attend workshops/courses.** These serve as central avenues that gather like-minded people. I went to a personal development workshop last year and met many great individuals, some of whom I became good friends with.
- **Volunteer.** Great way to kill 2 birds with one stone — not only do you get to spread kindness and warmth, you meet compassionate people with a cause.
- **Go to parties.** Parties such as birthday parties, Christmas/new year/celebration parties, housewarmings, functions/events, etc. Probably a place where you'll make a high quantity of new friends but not necessarily quality relationships. Good way to meet more people nonetheless

- **Visit bars and clubs.** Many people visit them to meet more friends, but I don't recommend them as the friends you make here are probably more hi-bye friends rather than type #2 or type #3 friends. It's good to just visit a couple of times and see how they are for yourself before you make your judgment.
- **Online communities.** The internet is a great way to meet new people. Some of my best friendships started online. I met **one of my best friends, K**, from an IRC channel 10 years ago. I have at least 2 other good friends whom I knew from online too. We've since met up numerous times and became great friends. Even today, I have numerous great friendships with people I've never met (other personal development bloggers and my readers). Just because we have not met (yet) does not mean we can't be great friends. Nowadays, online forums are one of the central places where communities gather. Check out online forums on your interest topics. Participate constructively and add value to the discussion. Soon, you'll get to know the people there better. :)

## 4. Take the first step

Once you are out there with people around you, someone has to make the first move. If the other party doesn't initiate a talk, take the first step to say hello. Get to know each other a little better! Share something about yourself, and then give the other party a chance to share about him/her. Something easy, like asking how the day is, or what they did today / in the past week is a great conversation starter. Once the ice is broken, it'll be easier to connect.

Read: [10 Rules of a Great Conversationalist](#)



## 5. Be open

### a) Be open-minded. Don't judge.

Sometimes you may have a preset notion of the kind of friend you want. Maybe someone who is understanding, listens, has the same hobbies, watches the same movies, has similar educational background, etc. And then when you meet the person and realize that he/she differs from your expectations, you then close yourself off.

Don't do that. Give the friendship a chance to blossom. More importantly, give yourself a chance with this budding friendship. I have several very good friends who come from totally different backgrounds, and I would never have thought that we would be so close when I first knew them, simply because we are so different. A good number of my ex-clients are people whom I'd never meet in normal circumstances given our diverse backgrounds, yet we get along extremely well, just like good friends.

### b) Open your heart

On the same note, open your heart to the person. This connection between you and the other party can only begin when your heart is open. This means to be trusting, have faith, and believe in the goodness of others. You can't form any new connection if you mistrust others or you are fearful that things won't work out. It'll send the wrong vibes and cause them to close off their hearts to you too.

When I make new friends, I open myself fully, with full faith that they are good people, with good hearts and good intentions. I notice that

because I do that, it has helped me foster a lot of genuine relationships which are built on trust, love and faith. These meaningful relationships wouldn't be possible if I had closed myself off at the onset. One simple example is how **I open myself to all of you fully** on my blog, and in return, I attract readers who are genuine, supportive, and kind. I'm not sure about other communities online, but I know Personal Excellence readers exude authenticity and love. I know that because I can feel the warmth from all of you whether in your emails, comments, or messages. :)

## 6. Get to know the person

A friendship is about both you and the other person. Get to know the person as an individual. Here are some questions to consider:

- What does he/she do?
- What are his/her hobbies?
- What has he/she been up to recently?
- What are his/her upcoming priorities/goals?
- What does he/she value the most?
- What are his/her values?
- What motivates/drives him/her?
- What are his/her passions in life? Goals? Dreams?

## 7. Connect with genuinity

Often times we are too caught up with our own concerns — such as what others will think of us, what we should say next, what our next action is — that we miss the whole point of a friendship. You can work on the presentation aspects such as how you look, what you

say, and how you say things, but don't obsess about them. These actions don't (truly) define the friendship. What defines the friendship is the connection between you and the friend.

Show warmth, love, and respect toward everyone you meet. Do things because you want to, and not because you have to. Care for them like you would yourself. If you approach others with genuinity, you will attract people who want to connect genuinely. Among them will be your future true friends.

## 8. Be yourself

Don't change yourself to make new friends. That's the worst thing you can do. Why do I say that?

Say you make many new friends by being vocal and brassy. However, your normal self is quiet and introverted. What happens then? It may be great initially to get those new friends, but the friendship was established with you being an extrovert. That means either:

1. You continue being the vocal, brassy person your new friends knew you as. However, it'll just be a facade. In the long-run, it'll be tiring to uphold this image. Not only that, the friendship will be built on a hollow front. Or
2. You change back to the introverted you. However, your friends will feel cheated because this isn't the person they befriended. They'll also gradually shift away if your personalities don't match.

So, just be yourself. That way, potential new friends will know you as you, and they'll use that to decide if they want to take the friendship

a step further. I don't think there's a need to be outward and articulate like Tony Robbins to get friends. It's all about being you. The truest friendships are built with both parties accepting each other for who they are.

## 9. Be there for them

A friendship is a supportive union between two people. Be there for your friends where you can. Does any of your friends need help currently? Is there anything you can help them with? How can you better support them?

When you help your friends, don't do so with the expectation of being helped next time. Rather, help unconditionally. Treat them with **emotional generosity**. Give because you want to, not because you feel obliged to. I find that the satisfaction I get from helping others and knowing they are better off is a reward greater than anything I can get in return.

## 10. Make the effort to stay in touch

At the end of the day, continual effort is required to maintain the friendship. Willingness to make the effort is what differentiates great friends from hi-bye friends. Ask your friends out every once in a while. Depending on the intensity of the friendship, there's no need to meet up every few days or once a week — catching up once a month or once every few months might be sufficient. The strength of your relationship is not measured by how frequently you meet. For some of my best friends, we meet only once every few months. Yet, there's never any doubt that we're closely connected and we will be there for each other when needed.

If both of you have your own set of engagements, it may be hard to find time together. Arrange for a simple meetup, say over lunch, tea, or dinner time. Or you can always catch up over text messages, online chat, or phone calls. Technology has made communication so easy that it's difficult not to stay in touch.

I hope you've found these 10 tips useful. :) Which can you apply to make new friends right away?

Here are some skills that'll be useful as you meet new people:

- [How to Make Small Talk in 5 Easy Ways \(Examples Included\)](#)
- [10 Tips to Improve Your Body Language](#)
- [Do You Meet these 10 Rules of a Great Conversationalist?](#)
- [How to Make a Good First Impression in 15 Minutes](#)

Check out my other articles on friendships:

- ['How Do I Meet Like-Minded People?'](#)
- [How to Have More Best Friends: My Heartfelt Guide](#)
- [Why I Parted Ways With My Best Friend of 10 Years](#)
- [You are the Average of the 5 People You Spend the Most Time With](#)
- [The Secret To Meaningful Social Relationships \(How to Remove Social Anxiety\)](#)
- [Cooped Up Indoors? Get a Life with These 7 Tips](#)

Get the manifesto version of this article: [\[Manifesto\] The Guide To Making New Friends](#)

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***<https://personalexcellence.co/blog/new-friends/>***

*Image: Boy and girl*

# How to Make Small Talk with Anyone in 5 Easy Ways



PE readers meet-up in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Oct 2012) (Image: [Personal Excellence](#))

*“As a quiet person by nature, how can I be more sociable? I do not have many topics to talk about with others.” - Starry Starry Night*

*“I was wondering if you could write on how to start and maintain a good conversation. Maybe something cool like ‘The Art of Small Talk’.” ~ Elfie*

Several months ago, I covered [10 rules to be a great conversationalist](#). Seeing how I have not written about *starting* conversations and I’ve been getting questions on that through [Ask Celes](#), I thought, *Why not do an article on that?*

I don’t like [small talk](#) (in the sense of frivolous conversations), but I recognize their purpose as conversation openers and space fillers in otherwise enjoyable conversations, tools to discover tidbits about the other party, or tools to decrease social distance (such as a manager using small talk to engage a team member).

If you are someone who has difficulty getting conversations started or keeping them going, here are five methods that will help:

## 1. Ask a Question

The run-of-the-mill way of starting conversations. I use it all the time.

Five usual questions from my toolbox and sample questions you can use:



- 1) **“What do you do?”** — Great for countries with work-centered cultures, such as Singapore and Hong Kong. People here tend to tie their identities with their work and invest a good deal of time working and thinking about their careers. They usually have no problems giving lengthy replies about work, especially if you pose follow-up questions, and are in fact more comfortable fielding work questions than personal ones like, “What is your passion?”, “What do your siblings do?”, or “What do you do in your free time?” This question is also a great opener for business and work events. Since everyone is there on a work agenda, they would be ready for work-talk.

After this opener about work, there are tons of questions you can follow up with. From “How long have you been working here?”, to “Do you like your job?”, to “What made you join this company?”, to “Who are the clients you work with?”, to “Where is your work place?”, to “Do you travel as part of your work?”, the possibilities are endless.

- 2) **“What brings you here today?”** — A useful one for events, be it house parties, social events, or business functions. Use the response as conversation fodder. “I’m here to meet new friends” means the person is open to socialize. Perhaps you can share social events coming up in your calendar. “I got the invite from the mailing list” means the person is already a member of their newsletter. You can follow up on this by asking when he/she joined the list and how he/she knew about this place. And so on.

- 3) **“What did you do today?”** , **“What have you been up to?”** , or **“What have you been busy with?”** — Sometimes the responses are of routine stuff, while other times they reveal fun tidbits about the person. Bridge on things you can talk about to build a connection.
- 4) **“How did XX go?”** — If you know something the person has been up to, follow up on that! For example, I just met my friends who returned from a vacation in Sydney, so one of my first questions after seeing them was, “So how did your Sydney trip go?”
- 5) **“What are you up to this week?”** — Since this question is about what’s next, it’s more appropriate to use it in the later half of the conversation, as a space filler if you’ve ran out of things to say.

## Two Watchouts

- 1) As you ask questions, be prepared to share about yourself. Refer to #8 of **10 rules of a great conversationalist** on 50-50 sharing. Asking one question after another without sharing anything can be perceived as invasive. You want to have a *conversation*, not an *interrogation* or an *interview*.
- 2) Learn to take a hint and move on when the person gives lukewarm responses. I was at a hair saloon last week and this assistant just *kept asking me question after question, in a relentless fashion, even after I got tired out by her and gave monosyllabic responses*. She obviously couldn’t read social cues as I was showing disinterest, both in my responses and **body language**. It got to the point where I became highly annoyed by her nosiness and was ready to ask my regular consultant to take

- her away. You don't want to annoy people nor intrude into their personal space. Third time is the charm—I usually move on after the third consecutive lukewarm response. Besides, you can't have a conversation if the other party isn't interested to engage.

## 2. Drop a Compliment

Examples:

- “That is a nice dress! It looks great on you. Where did you get that?” (*Works better from girl to girl; else you'll either come across as gay or trying to hit on the girl, both of which wouldn't work if they aren't true.*)
- “I like your bag! Very classy. Did you just buy it?”
- “You look very refreshed. Did you have a good rest over the weekend?”
- “Hey Matt, I just read your report on social existentialism and the role of dummies in our society. Awesome work! How long did it take for you to write that?”
- “Great job on the presentation this morning Max. Everyone was talking about it at the pantry just now!”
- “You look great today. :) “

## Why Compliments Work

Compliments are a great way to **reduce social distance**, **remove tension**, and **open someone up**. They are especially appreciated in a society where **emotional generosity isn't commonplace**.

I personally love it when people drop me compliments. Their **emotional generosity** sends all-round-nice vibes to everyone.

- **Friend/Stranger:** “You look great today!”
- **Me:** “Thank you!” \*beams\* (This then opens the space for a follow-up comment.)

I also love dropping compliments to other people and making them smile.

- **Me:** “You look great with this shirt!”
- **Friend/Stranger:** “Oh, thanks! I just bought it last week. I was actually planning to wear a different shirt! I’m glad you like it!”  
\*which then opens up new conversation topics, such as where he/she bought the shirt and why he/she was planning to wear a different shirt\*

I think most people’s issue with compliments is that they associate them with disingenuousness, being agenda-driven, or sucking up. That’s quite a fear-based manner of viewing compliments, and it probably comes from being brought up in an emotionally-stingy culture. Giving compliments doesn’t have to be related with falseness or having a motive; in fact it doesn’t have to do with anything at all. You can drop compliments simply because you see goodness in something and you just want to spread the love.

As long as you keep your compliments real, there’s no reason to shy away from them.

### 3. Use a Surrounding Object as an Anchor

- (*At a talk*) “The speaker is doing a great job. I like the section where he talked about the role of innovation in startups. What do you think about that?”
- (*At a social event*) “I had such a hard time finding the location! It took me about 20 minutes to find the place. What time did you get here?”
- (*At your workplace*) “Regis totally lost his temper at the morning meeting. Did you hear about it?”
- (*At a cafe, while queuing up to get your drinks*) “I love the dark chocolate mocha here. Have you tried it before?”
- (*At the supermarket, at the ramen aisle*) “I’m thinking between the Mushroom-Flavored Ramen and Hot & Spicy Ramen and I’m not sure which one to pick. Which do you think I should go for?” (This is related to Method #4: Ask for Help / Advice.)

Using a surrounding object takes the attention away from both you and the person and creates a safe zone for both of you to connect without going into personal details. After some sharing and after a certain comfort level has been achieved, you can broach personal topics.

Be open to using different surrounding objects as your conversation starter. It can include the person’s possessions:

- (*Referring to the tie the person is wearing*) “I saw a similar tie at Macy’s last week and wanted to get that. Did you get this at Macy’s?”

Or even someone else:

- (*Referring to another participant at an event*) “I’ve seen that person at similar events before. I heard he/she is the director at Firm Y. Have you talked to him/her yet?”

## 4. Ask for Help / Advice

I had quite a blast chatting with this guy, who heads a PR firm, at a Christmas party last month. We had a stimulating conversation which spun off multiple sub-topics and lasted for a good 30–40 minutes.

My opener? I asked him for advice on a goal I’m currently working on.

*“Hey, since you are in PR, I was thinking to get your advice on something. One of my goals is to up my blog traffic from one million page views a month to ten million. How would you advise me to achieve that?”*

Since it’s something I’m working on and blogging/social is relevant to his space (PR), and everyone peruses one blog or another as a consumer these days, I thought, why not kill two birds with a stone and use my business agenda as a socialization tool?

This one innocent question got us talking about site analytics, content, viral content, what makes viral content, why it’s pointless to try and create viral content, some of his past client engagements, blogs he reads, why he reads them, and wildly popular content we came across in our space.

At the end of the discussion, he thanked me for bringing up the topic because it got his brain spinning. I thought that was nice of him.

“Thanks!” I smiled, while thanking him for his thought-provoking answers.

## Why Asking for Help / Advice Works

People love to help. Helping makes them feel important. Helping makes them feel like they are adding value to people’s lives. Helping puts them in an advisory role which hones the leader in them.

I appreciate it when people ask me for advice, even if it’s something I do not have expertise on.

For example, I have a friend who is an experienced business investor. Sometimes he will ask me for advice on projects he is working on. It could be about logo designs, business investment decisions, or something else altogether. While I may not have 100% experience in everything that he asks, I feel valued when he seeks my point of view. I then do my best to share my perspective, while learning more about this.

When you ask someone for advice, it benefits the people both ways. For you, you get to learn about different ideas. For them, they learn about something you’re doing, and possibly grow from the exchange. Such an exchange helps both of you learn more about each other as friends.

## Sample Scripts to Ask for Help / Advice

Is there anything you could use some advice on at the moment? Use that as a conversation opener — you will be surprised by how ready people are to help. Try the following scripts:

- “I’m working on this project and I hope to achieve X. [Insert two to three line description about said project.] What do you think?”
- “I’ve been thinking about something for the past few days and I could use with a new perspective. [Insert description.] What are your thoughts?”
- “I’d like your advice on [insert topic and some background information]. What advice can you give me?”
- “I’m currently looking for X resource/contact for something I’m working on. Do you know anyone who can be of help?”
- “I’m planning to do X and I’m thinking of either Option A or Option B. Which would you choose?”

Even you don’t *really* have anything you need advice on at the moment, it’s great to get a new perspective on whatever you are working on. I do that all the time, be it for my business plans, **decisions I’m contemplating over**, or personal agendas. It could even be as simple as picking a movie to watch this Friday!

The interesting thing is that as people crack their brains to give good advice, their self-monitoring personas recede and their real personalities emerge from their shells. That’s when real connections form.

## 5. Share Something about Yourself

What did you just do recently? What new things you’ve been up to? What are your goals for the next three months? Share them.

This method is the opposite of method #1. Here, you open up the conversation by volunteering information about yourself, whereas in method #1, you open the conversation by fishing for information about the person.



This method is useful in situations where:

1. **...the person looks shy or socially awkward.** Sharing about yourself helps to take attention away from him/her and onto you, so he/she can ease into his/her own space.
2. **...the person hasn't been responsive to your questions or comments.** Perhaps he/she is not keen on sharing, so you can initiate the sharing instead. In doing so, you remove yourself from the power-position (since the person asking the questions directs the flow of the conversation) and allow yourself to be vulnerable (sharing means subjecting yourself to potential evaluation and judgment). As the person see you opening up, he/she may warm up to you and reciprocate in sharing as well.

I've to admit that I'm not good at doing this unless I'm with personal friends, where we have all the time to catch up with one another. I prefer to use the limited time I have with strangers/**new friends** to learn more about them.

My friend Karl is really good at sharing though. In one of the first times we met, he shared this story about how his luggage got misplaced and he had to borrow a grossly undersized pants from his co-worker for a business training, where he was the trainer in a crowd of some 100 people. It was hilarious. Other times, he would share random things going on in his life.

I may not relate to everything that someone shares (for example, I haven't had my luggage misplaced before), but it's nice learning about someone through their stories and knowing more about them based on how they approach their life circumstances. It then creates a safe space for me to share about myself, because just as I'm interested to listen their stories, they would probably be interested to

hear mine as well.

A conversation is a two-way exchange. Instead of expecting the other party to talk, why not make the first move and volunteer some tidbits about yourself?

## To You

How can you apply these conversation-starter techniques in your life? Do you have any techniques of your own in making small talk?

*This is part of a series on interpersonal communication.*

1. [The Secret To Meaningful, Fulfilling Social Relationships \(How to Remove Social Anxiety\)](#)
2. [How to Make Small Talk with Anyone in 5 Easy Ways \(Examples Included!\)](#)
3. [10 Rules of a Great Conversationalist](#)
4. [10 Tips to Improve Your Body Language](#)
5. [How to Keep Calm and Make a Good First Impression in 15 Minutes or Less](#)

***This article is first published at:***

***<https://personalexcellence.co/blog/small-talk/>***

# How to Have More Best Friends in Life: My Heartfelt Guide



(Image: [Jaci Berkopec](#))

Have you ever experienced times when you want a listening ear, but you can't find one? Times when you feel lonely and down, but there's no one you can speak to? Times when you wonder how you

can have all these friends and contacts in your social media list and phone book, yet you've never felt more alone in this world?

I felt exactly like that last week.

## Aloneness in a Sea of Friends

Last week, I was feeling depressed about something (not relevant to this post, and I don't remember what it's about anymore) and wanted to talk to someone about it.

As I looked through my phone list for someone to reach out to, I realized to my utter **disappointment** that there was no one I felt I could talk to.

This is not the first time I felt this way. There have been other times where I felt there was no one there for me in this world. Times when I was down and out; when I felt I needed a break (not a rest, but like a break from the world); when I felt unappreciated; when I felt heavy amounts of self-contempt. While such situations do not occur all the time, there have been moments when I feel this way. And when they happened in the past, there were times when I was unable find someone, a fellow friend whom I trust, to confide in.

It was depressing. Original problem aside, it was even more depressing not to have someone whom I could reach out to. It's quite a hollow feeling when you have an entire phone list of friends, colleagues, business associates, relatives, acquaintances, social buddies, but not feel like there's any one you can call and speak to. That somehow, out of the all the hundreds or perhaps a thousand people I knew out there, that there wasn't one - not even one - person whom I felt I could call at that moment when I felt down and out.

It felt as if these connections were facades. That while I'm friends in name and form with all these people out there (name meaning the labels in our relationship like colleagues/friends/pals/etc.; form meaning we may occasionally meet up and all), all the mingling, the socializing, the interactions, are nothing but a big charade at the end of the day.

## The Different Friends in Our Life

Friends **come** and **go**. I guess it's a fact of life. The friends whom I used to be able to reach out to, and air my thoughts openly - the friends whom I'll consider my true, soul friends, have faded out of my life in the past few years.

Two of my best friends recently relocated to another country. One due to work, and another due to personal reasons. When they left, a part of my inner circle became broken. One of my good friends has been MIA for the past few months, partly because I think his girlfriend opposes to him talking to me, probably because we were good friends. Another good friend from back in school has been inaccessible for a good part of our friendship in the past few years. Despite me informing him about the issue, it has never improved. It made me realize that perhaps our friendship was never as close as I thought it was. Then there was **my best friend of 10 years from the past**, whom I broke away from a few years ago, because our friendship had reached a point where it became toxic rather than elevated us.

There had been other friends whom I used to call and talk about whatever's on my mind. These were friends I knew from back in school and in my previous workplace, and I was very close to

them for a period of time.

But time saw us drifting away from each other as we became occupied with different things in our lives - me with Personal Excellence and my personal development business, and them with their work and/or partners. I guess things have changed as well since then. Even though I have made numerous attempts to keep in touch over the past few years, I can't say everyone is as committed to stay in touch.

For other people on my list, they are normal/good friends, but not the kind of friends I'd call and go into some psycho babble. Firstly, I do not feel close to them – at least, not close enough where I'd want/expect them to drop everything they're doing and listen to me just because I'm feeling down. The trust has just not been established.

Many of them are social friends – activity buddies whom I hang out with for dinners, lunches, meet-ups, etc with. But our friendships have never developed beyond just being activity mates. Even though I may want to get to know them better, sometimes I feel an iron wall between us - one they erected because they don't want to let people in. The interactions never go beyond superficial discussions and slapstick jokes, which fade away in distant memory the next day, never to surface again. Many times, I can't help but feel that I don't know them at all, just like how they don't really know who I am as well.

Secondly, the context of our friendship is not one where I can say something and expect them to understand where I'm coming from. Most people know me as someone who's strong, confident, knowledgeable, and for what it's worth, that's predominantly the

person I've become today.

But there's also a sensitive, emotional, doubtful, vulnerable, self-debilitating side of me deep down inside, who unveils herself when times are tough and no one's looking. If any regular friend is to see me like that, the person would probably think I have gone off the deep end, or I'm undergoing some serious mental issues. The person would never be able to understand nor comprehend. Close friends, on the other hand, would know me enough not to judge or overreact.

Thirdly, because everyone has his/her viewpoints and experiences in life, I don't open up to everyone about everything. Rather, I select the friends who have relevant background and understanding about what I'm doing/going through, so it's easier to share, discuss and connect with.

For example, I'm not going to discuss my blogging goals and strategies if someone has absolutely zero background about blogging, because it's not going to be a constructive discussion (compared to when I talk to someone who's in the field too). I'm also not going to talk about emotional eating if the person has not been through it before. It's all related to point #2, regarding context. With people who have not gone through that same experience before, they can end up judging/**imposing**, or unable to help or advise on the situation. Even if they may have the best intentions, the chats can sometimes leave me more frustrated than before we talk.

## Anatomy of Authentic Relationships

As I mulled over my feeling of emptiness, I couldn't help but wonder what make our best friends, best friends. What is it that makes us

decide if this is someone we want to reach out to when we feel down? Why is it that I feel more inclined to contact certain people, but not others? Why is it that the same, few names pop into my mind, whenever I feel weak, vulnerable, and depressed?

And most importantly: *How can we extend this kind of relationship to everyone around us as well, since this kind of heartfelt, unadulterated connection is arguably the highest form of friendships that one would like to get?*

To find the answers to my questions, I began to sieve out the people whom I consider myself to be close to, whether today or at some point in the past. I thought about the people whom I had reached out to confide in before. I thought about the people whom I used to feel safe sharing my darkest thoughts and feelings with. I thought about the people whom I used to think about contacting whenever I was in a fix.

As I analyzed these friendships, I began to see commonalities among them:

- These people had, at one point in time, been there for me when I was down in the past.
- These people had never once judged me, criticized me, nor been negative to me.
- These people had supported and encouraged me before in my life.
- These were people whom I got to know better before our friendship progressed, due to the presence of a common "space", such as school, a workplace, a business project, and so on.

Out of all these friendships, there wasn't a set point where they



suddenly switched from hi-bye/regular friendships to a deeper friendship overnight. Rather, it was more of a progression:

1. We knew each other under a certain context, be it work/school/life (length of friendship notwithstanding).
2. They had been supportive in the friendship all along, and had always looked out for me, one way or another.
3. Because of that, it built the trust, from me to them.
4. Over time, it led me to confide in them during the points when I faced challenges in my life. The experience made the friendship even stronger.

If anything, the starting point for these true, authentic friendships was their unconditional kindness, their non-judgmental nature, their supportiveness, and their giving spirit. Without any of this, the friendships would never have blossomed the way they did. Without these, I would never have confided in them, and these friends would never have become my good friends.

## Being a Best Friend vs. Having Best Friends

When I was thinking about this, I realized to my horror that I have not been any of these to my friends out there. I have not been working on building my friends' trust in me. I have not been understanding, supportive nor encouraging to others. I have not placed others' needs before mine. I have not been very interested in what others are going through in their lives.

In short, I have not been a best friend to others.

Suddenly, I felt so incredibly ashamed of myself. That while others have been giving to me all along, I have not been giving to others. That while people have been supporting me in different stages of my

life, I have been taking it for granted. That instead of checking how others are and whether they're doing okay in their lives, there I was, feeling sad for myself because I didn't have anyone I could speak to about my issues.

Why should I expect others to be there for me if I have been that way to others? Why should I feel **disappointed** and complain to the universe about my lack of confidants, when I have not been that to others around me? Why should I expect others to be best friends to me, when I have not been a best friend to others?

I realized that I have been selfish in how I have been approaching my friendships. I realized I have taken my friends for granted - expecting them to be there all the time, assuming they would be there when I need them. I realized I have also been relying on circumstances and the world to bring me great friendships vs. making the effort to create them. I realized that I had no right to expect the world to hand me authentic friendships, when I had not made an effort to cultivate such friendships to begin with.

Before expecting others to be there for me all the time, perhaps the question to ask is this: *Have I been a best friend to others first?*

I realized it's possible for us to create true, close friendships - as many as we want, in fact. It's a matter of us taking the first step, reaching out to others, establishing trust and bridging the divide. But first, we've to make the conscious effort to build the friendships to begin with. Because until we do, the gap between us and the other souls out there will remain as they are. It'll not close by itself without hard work and desire.

# How to Create More Authentic Connections (i.e. How to Have More Best Friends)

*"A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away." - Proverb*

In [10 Useful Tips To Make New Friends](#), I mentioned there are 3 types of friends. Hi-bye friends, regular social buddies, and true-soul friends. I shared how we can make new friends in general, but did not cover specifically on making true, soul friends.

For the rest of today's article, I'll share with you my heartfelt guide on how to create true, soul friendships. Rather than wait for the universe to hand you your best friends, it's up to us to go out there and create such friendships. Of course, you can't control whether others want to return the effort or not, but I do truly believe that when we give out of the goodness of our heart, and when we connect authentically with the intention to help them, other people will reciprocate too.

Not only that, we'll also attract like-minded people who want to create authentic connections too. By focusing on the steps below in the guide, it's a matter of time before the best of the best friendships will unfold before you.

I also want to state that I'm using "best friends" loosely to represent close, heartfelt, authentic connections. It stands for people whom

you know you can readily reach out to whenever you need help; people whom you know will be there for you no matter what happens. These are the most real, most true connections you can ever have in life.

## 1. Be a great friend to others first (Think about how you can give vs. receive)

Before we think about having more best friends, we should do some self-evaluation and ask ourselves if we have been best friends to others first. Because if we haven't, then there's some internal work to be done. How can we expect others to be our best friends, if we're not even that way to them first? What right do we have to expect that from people out there?

I was talking to a good friend a couple of months back or so (on the topic of **love**), and this comment came up about making relationships work — "Think about how willing you are about giving first, versus what you expect from the relationship". (Not word for word, but something along those lines.) That gave me somewhat of an aha moment, because I realized that this was not how I had viewed relationships at all. I had always been (implicitly) seeing them as what I could get out of them, vs. what I could give to the relationship itself. That was definitely some food for thought. I couldn't help but do quite a bit of self-reflection after that.

While the point above was made in the context of romantic relationships, it applies to friendships too. Some questions for you to think over:

- How much are you willing to give to your friendships to make them work? A lot? A little? Nothing?

- How willing are you to be a best friend to others? Do you recognize that a friendship is a 2-way relationship?
- Do you recognize that making friendships work is about first being that best friend to others first?

If you understand the above, I'll say you're in the right place to make meaningful, genuine relationships. If not, perhaps you're in no place to expect others to give you unconditional kindness.

I'd never thought about how I could be a best friend to others, but instead thought about which of my friends were better friends compared to others. But now it's different as I focus on giving vs. receiving in my friendships.

## 2. Identify who you want to build authentic relationships with

Not everyone is a compatible match when it comes to creating authentic, high quality relationships.

For one, different people vibrate at different **consciousness levels**, and that already filters out the people you can connect with.

Someone who's at the level of fear obviously isn't a good match for someone who's at the level of courage. The former will be hesitating from making decisions in fear of ramifications, while the latter will be eager to take bold steps and create results in his/her life. Because of this, the former may end up holding the latter back. The former may become dependent on the latter on decisions and directions in life, which creates a parasite-host situation.

Likewise, someone who's at the level of guilt wouldn't be a good match for someone at the level of pride. The former is in a constant

state of anguish and regret, while the latter may make use of the former's guilt to build his/her life. This may result in a manipulative, backhanded relationship.

Secondly, different people have different values. Your values are like the **big rocks** holding the friendship in place. People with similar values will have little problem connecting with one another.

The friendship blossoms almost naturally. However, when people with different values get together, they might find the friendship binding instead. They may find themselves disagreeing and conflicting more often than they support one another. My **past friendship with K** is an example of how friendships built on diverging values can bind us.

Ideally, your best friendships are built with people who (a) vibrate at a similar **consciousness level** as you, or 1 level above/below yours. If the levels are too far apart, it'll be hard for both of you to connect. (b) have similar values as you do.

That's not to say that you ignore people who don't fit either criteria. No, not at all. Remember #1 on being a best friend to others first - this applies to everyone, regardless on their consciousness level or values. If there's a friend who needs you, then be there for them, no matter who he/she is. Point #2 isn't about discriminating or alienating certain friends - It's just about consciously selecting people whom you want to further your friendship with. At the base level, you should continue to be a best friend to everyone in your circle, where you can.

Let's do a simple exercise now - Look through your connections list, and think about the people whom you're most eager to build a better relationship with. Pick out at least 3-5 people.

- It may be an acquaintance whom you've only met once (or only corresponded through email), but you feel there's potential to bring the relationship to the next level. This person may have exuded some vibes which made you feel positive about him/her.
- It may be a business contact you've been working with professionally, but haven't had the chance to know about him/her personally.
- It may be an old friend whom you've been in touch with on/off, but never made the effort to know him/her better.

As I did this exercise, I picked out 7 people. They include a course-mate from my ex-university whom I've been out of touch with, 3 contacts I've made in the course of running my business (only met each of them 1-2 times before), one business partner I've been working closely with for the past year for my workshops, one like-minded business owner, and a recent client who contacted me for a workshop engagement. Most of them are people whom I do not know very well (yet), but I'd love to get to know better. These are also people whom I got pretty good vibes from in the few times we've contacted each other.

When you're done, go to the next step.

### 3. Create opportunities to know each other

The next step after #2 is to create opportunities to bond with them.

Before I regarded my best friends as best friends, we started off as regular friends. It was after knowing them better that I slowly became more open with them. How did we get to know each other better? By being part of a common "space" that allowed us to hang out and know each other better. For example, being from the same

school. Taking the same classes. Joining the same activities.  
Working in the same company. Working on the same projects.

So what should we do when there's no longer such a context for us to make friends? Say when we graduate from school? When we leave a club/group/association? When we quit our jobs? How about people who become self-employed, where they're not part of any organizations but themselves? Wouldn't everything come to an end?

Well, not quite. If that "space" where both of you used to be a part of disappears because of a progression in your life path, or if the space doesn't exist in the first place, then it's up to you to create it! Create opportunities for you to know each other, via asking them out.

There's no need to wait or expect people to ask you out first. You can well do it yourself. The easiest way is to ask him/her out for tea, lunch, or dinner. If you have a party or gathering coming up, you can also invite him/her along. Maybe he/she will **say no**, but maybe he/she will say yes too.

If no one's asking you out, it may be because it did not strike them that they can do so. It's also possible that they take a passive stance toward friendships, as I did in the past - I was just waiting for the universe to drop good people on my lap. This was a poor approach. As I mentioned above, we have a role to play when it comes to creating authentic friendships. So let's do that, and stop waiting for the world to drop best friends on our lap. Let's work on earning our friendships rather than taking them for granted.

For example, last month I initiated a meet-up with an old friend. There was no premise for the meet-up at all - I just thought of the friend one day, thought that we hadn't met up for a while, and sent a



text message to see if she wanted to meet up in that same week. I was well expecting her to reject me and say that she was busy for the whole week.

As it turned out, she was free - and we met up the next day, below my flat, where we chatted for 4 hours, up till almost midnight. In this one meet-up, I think we got to know each other much better than the entire decade we knew each other. And all this, from sending a simple message with a simple intention to meet-up. In doing so, I created an opportunity, a space for us to know each other better, just like you should do so for your other friendships too.

## 4. Get to know them vs. Fringe topics

True, authentic friendships built on mutual understanding of each other. This only happens when you get to know the person as an individual.

When you meet someone, there are 2 types of discussions that can take place. One is where you chat about marginal, fringe topics, like what's on the news, the weather today, the movies, tv shows, celebrities, latest gossip, and the like. The other is where you get to know the other person earnestly, from one soul to another - from aspirations to **fears**, from goals to dreams.

The first type of discussion will leave you feeling empty at the end of the meet-up, and quite frankly, does nothing to forward the friendship. At the end, it remains a superficial connection, characteristic of that between hi-bye friends and even regular friends. The latter, on the other hand, helps you know the other person on a deeper level, and goes a long way toward building the friendship between both of you. It's the first step to building authentic

connections.

If you want to further a friendship, get to know the other party personally. How is he/she doing? What has he/she been up to? How is he/she doing at work? Is he/she happy there? What's been on his/her mind lately? Then just let the discussion flow from there. Make sure the discussion is split at least 50/50 between you/your friend. Be mindful when you're talking too much, because you may be preventing your friend from sharing.

If you want to take the discussion to the next level, you can learn more about his/her aspirations, what motivates him/her, his/her highest goals and dreams, and more. If the person is earnest about building an open friendship, he/she will readily share, vs. seclude him/herself.

For me, getting to know someone is always an exciting process. Each person is multi-faceted, has his/her motivations that drives him/her, has his/her own story to tell, and a history that makes him/her who he/she is today. Knowing someone is like flipping a book and discovering the mysteries that lie within each page.

## 5. Focus on the positives, not the negatives

In connecting with others, you may experience qualities about them which you don't like. Don't let yourself shy away from that friendship just because of that though. Unless it's a make-or-break issue (such as values mismatch), you should not let that get in the way of the development of the friendship.

It's easy to harp on someone else's faults, but such a mindset doesn't help you build true friendships. Firstly, who's to say whether

something is a flaw or a not? At the end of the day, it's all just one's perception. Everything can always be interpreted 2 ways - negative or positive, and it's up to you on how you want to perceive them. For example, an impatient person is efficient. A bossy person is good at taking charge. A quiet person is a good listener. A chatty person is sociable and lively. A critical person is sharp and honest. They are just 2 sides of the same coin.

Secondly, true friendships aren't built on a premise where you pinpoint your friends' every "flaw" and "mistake". They are built under the context where the other party is non-judgmental and nurturing. If you think about it, do you like people who constantly **criticize** you and watch your every move? People who pinpoint and nitpick your mistakes? Or do you prefer people who see you for who you are? People who are encouraging and supportive? Chances are, it's the latter.

You can't change the person's character (that's his/her decision to make), but you can change how you see them. Be **emotionally generous**. Rather than harp on things you don't like about someone, focus on the positives instead. Recognize his/her strengths, capabilities and skills. **Give praise** where appropriate. See each friend as who he/she is and who he/she can be, not who he/she isn't. Be supportive and encouraging.

## 6. Share your life

A friendship is a 2-way effort. Besides getting to know the person (see #4), you should be ready to share your life with them too. You cannot keep expecting the other person to share if you don't do any sharing yourself. The friendship will not progress this way.

Let them know what you've been up to. Share with them things you're passionate about. Let them in on your goals and dreams. Let them know what's on your mind. Be as open and honest with them as you can.

## 7. Build trust first

Do you recognize that for any friendship to progress, trust has to be built first? You can't just waltz in one day and suddenly expect someone to open him/herself to you, just because you reached out and made the first effort. Friendships don't work that way. You have to first build the trust, bit by bit.

When I think about what made me open up to my friends in the past, it was because they were somehow just always there for me, whenever I needed them. Looking back, it was because they made an effort to be a part of my life, whether through conscious or unconscious actions on their part. This led me to trust them, and learn to count on them.

For someone to let you in, you have to **build the trust in the other person**. And one of the ways is by making an effort to be a part of the person's life, vs. just observing from the sideway. Some ways to do this:

- Drop him/her a sms or email every now and then to see how he/she is doing.
- Arrange for a meet up regularly, say once a month for starters, then more frequently if the friendship blossoms.
- On top of the normal lunch/dinner outings, suggest to go some place and do something different that's in line with the person's interests

- If the person is part of certain interest groups, join in to see how they are like. Get to know this side of his/her life that you're normally not privy to.
- You can keep in touch via phone too. Do so only if you know the person is receptive to chatting on the phone, and if both of you are somewhat close. If both of you are not close, it'll be good to check if it's okay to call first, as the person may be busy with other things. Phone calls are intrusive in nature and may not be appreciated if you're calling on non-urgent matters.
- Be in touch with what's happening in the person's life during the times when you are not meeting up. Social networking sites today, like Twitter and Facebook, makes it easy for you to that.

## 8. Let them in during your down times

This might not come across as an intuitive step, but it's actually an important one.

If you'd like to build a true, authentic friendship with someone else, you need to open up to him/her.

Beyond just sharing about your life, your thoughts, and your feelings as I mentioned in #6, it's also about being able to share your happiest times and your down times. The times when my friendships with others really advanced was when I shared with them the frustrations and challenges I was facing. When I did that, I gave my friends the opportunity to know more about me and my inner world, and I also gave myself the opportunity to further a friendship.

Some of you may hesitate about doing that, because you may feel that the other party may not want to hear about it, and you may just be intruding on the person's space. I actually agree. My

recommendation is to do it if the person has made the effort to know you (#4), is supportive (#5) and be a part of your life (#7). This way, you know this person is sincere about developing the friendship, and you know you can count on him/her.

Note that friendships where only one party shares become lopsided, and are generally not healthy. These are not really friendships, but more mentor-mentee relationships. Which is okay if that's the intention, but not okay if you're looking for an equal friendship. If you want to build a 2-way friendship, you should let the person in on your inner thoughts. This will encourage the person to share accordingly too. I've found from my friendships that when I share openly about what I feel and what I think, my friends are encouraged to follow suit too.

## 9. Support them: Be there for them when they need you

### Support them by being there when they need you

As you do #1-#8, your friend may gradually open up to you. He/she may start to share with you his/her **fears**, concerns and obstacles he/she is facing in life.

Just like you want others to be for you when you're in need, make sure you're there for them as well. This is where you let him/her know via concrete actions that you're a true friend who's here to support him/her in his/her problems. Actions speak louder than words - at the end of the day, it doesn't matter the things you say about the friendship, but but you do.

### Don't impose your judgment

Besides being there for them when they need you, it's also about (a) being supportive and understanding and (b) listening without bias, i.e. not imposing your judgment.

Not too long ago, I confided in a good friend about my emotional eating issues. She kept writing it off, saying it was about eating right and exercising - even though I told her that this wasn't the real problem and it was something more **deeply rooted**. I was angry and frustrated. The whole time, I didn't feel like she tried to understand what I was saying. In the end, feeling dejected, I closed myself off. While we continued to be close, I never once talked to her again about my struggles with my **weight** and emotional eating, because I knew she wasn't going to **empathize** with what I was going through.

While you may have your best intentions, you have to be careful about imposing judgments on others' problems. Allow them to share openly, and help them to process what they're going through. Don't conclude or judge without hearing the person out. You may end off closing off a budding friendship.

## **Empathizing vs. Giving solutions**

Sometimes people approach you because they are looking for a listening ear. Sometimes they approach you because they're looking for solutions. Learn to recognize their needs and wear that hat accordingly. There's no need to give solutions when the person is just looking for someone to hear him/her out.

## **Look out for implicit cries for help**

Being there for them doesn't happen only when they physically ask for help. A lot of times, people don't "ask" for help explicitly. They

may be afraid of troubling you.

You need to be sensitive to others' needs. Keep yourself up to date of what's happening in their lives (#7). Listen to sub-text of what a person says. Always keep a look out for ways to be a better friend to him/her. For example, if a friend has been troubled by work in the past week, you can ask him/her out to take her mind off work. You can also get a small present to cheer him/her out. It's the littlest things you do that make the biggest difference.

## 10. Focus on those who reciprocate your efforts

In your efforts to reach out and connect, there are going to be times when your efforts are not reciprocated. For example, there are going to be friends / contacts who don't respond. There are going to be people who tell you they are too busy to meet. And there are going to be people who keep canceling on you / pushing back on the appointment dates when you're trying to accommodate to their requests and looking forward to the meet-ups.

It doesn't matter though. I have friends or acquaintances who don't respond to outreach requests or take a long time to revert; who keep saying they're busy and set a 1-month lead-time for appointments when you're just asking them out for a simple lunch/dinner; who cancel in the last minute or don't even inform when they can't come; and who play lip service to meet up requests.

In the past I would wonder why they make it so hard to meet, when I'm trying so hard to make our friendship work out. I'd feel quite annoyed and **disappointed** at them.

But then I realize that's just the way they are. Maybe they are anti-social and prefer to be alone. Maybe they're not at the stage in their



life where they want to connect with other people. Maybe I'm just not an important-enough friend to them. Maybe meeting people and building friendships are not a priority in their life at the moment. After all, for a long time in the past, I prioritized work above all else, so I have been guilty of that.

Respect their choices. Rather than crib at the people who don't reciprocate, hey — focus on the ones who do return your efforts. Let the latter group know how much you appreciate them taking the time to meet up. Be there for them when they need you. Spend more effort on cultivating relationships with people who care and make an effort, rather than those who choose to close themselves off to begin with. You'll find connecting with the former much more rewarding. :)

Get the manifesto version of this article: [\[Manifesto\] How to Create More Meaningful Relationships](#)

***This article is first published***

***at: <https://personalexcellence.co/blog/best-friends/>***

# The Secret To Meaningful, Fulfilling Social Relationships (How to Remove Social Anxiety)



(Image: Akron)

*Hi Celes, I'm have social phobia/anxiety. [When I'm around people,] I can be relaxed sometimes, but most of the time I get nervous and I can't think of anything. I want to be sociable and talkative like other people. What can I do? How can I overcome this? Please help me. Thanks a lot - Enes*

*Hi Celes, besides professional help, do you have any tips for someone who suffers from social anxiety? - Tina*

Do you have social anxiety? Do you feel anxious when you are around other people, especially people you are meeting for the first time? Are you worried about how people may perceive you? Do you fear interacting with other people, because you are afraid you would slip up, make a fool of yourself, and create a bad impression in others' minds? Do you sometimes go to great lengths just to avoid facing or interacting with other people?

Social anxiety is a common problem many face, perhaps more than one may realize. For every run of [Live a Better Life in 30 Days Program](#) and [Be a Better Me in 30 Days Program](#), I often read about participants who have social anxiety problems, beginning as early as when they were young. Some of them face mild anxiety problems in the form of sweaty palms and mind blocks when they meet new people. Some face more severe problems, where they experience intense fear of being around people, even going to great lengths just to avoid such situations.

In today's article, I'll be sharing the one fundamental reason why

people have social anxiety. (And no, contrary to what many of you may think, it really has nothing to do with lack of confidence or fear of interaction.) I'll share the fundamental mindset shift that, when you apply it, will eliminate social anxiety from your life.

Even for those of you who do not experience social anxiety, this "tip" that I'll be sharing will help you increase the quality of your relationships by 300 to 400%. You will realize that whatever disputes, anxiousness, unhappiness, and fear you may experience in your relationships are totally redundant. This is the mindset which I've been using for the past 3-4 years and has helped me gain tremendously in the area of relationships.

## Enter Tom, a Shy, Socially Anxious Person

To illustrate the essence of what I'm going to share, I will use an example.

Imagine Tom, a shy, secluded, and socially withdrawn person. Like most people who are socially withdrawn, Tom has social anxiety problems. Whenever he meets someone new, he tends to clam up and not know what to say. He also feels nervous as he wonders whether he's doing anything stupid which may give the person a bad impression of him. Sometimes he blabbers off and says something silly, makes the situation worse. Awkward silences are all too familiar to him. The situation worsens by two to three fold when it's a girl, because he has a high tendency to turn red which gives his anxiety away.

Here, you see multiple signs of anxiety at work. Lack of confidence, mental block, nervousness, second-guessing himself during the interaction, stuttering, flushing, and so on. For those of you with

social anxiety (be it mild or severe), you can probably relate to this.

Now, let's examine Tom when he interacts with people he knows, such as his good friend Chandler from high school, whom he has known for more than 20 years. Chandler is like his brother. Tom has no problem talking to him, asking questions, making small talk, answering questions, and having a conversation in general. He feels at ease and behaves totally like himself. Tom also does not feel any need to please or instill a good impression of himself in Chandler - because that's Chandler, his best bud, right there. Chandler knows him, he knows Chandler, and there's no distance between them, so to speak.

What just happened here? As you can see, Tom is able to behave totally normal when he's with his best friend. But why is it different when he's around other people?

## The Reason Behind Society Anxiety (and the Key To Meaningful, Fulfilling Relationships)

This difference in behavior is because **Tom perceives other people in a different manner than he perceives Chandler.**

You see, in Tom's mind, he perceives Chandler as his very good friend whom he trusts, relies on, and enjoys spending time with. There's no reason to be nervous around Chandler since they are so close to each other, like brothers. It's like Tom being nervous when he's by himself. It's silly.

On the other hand, Tom sees people he doesn't know as people who are separate from him - distant, ambiguous, and alien. Not knowing who these people are, how they are like, and what their

intentions are, he views them with great caution and keeps them at a distance so as to protect himself. He also feels a need to project a certain image around them, since he wants to give others a good impression of himself.

He does this to everyone he meets, *until* time passes, trust is built, the walls come down, a relationship is formed, and it is proven that the people he is with are good-hearted, trustworthy, reliable, and genuine people.

Tom's perception of people is pretty much the same way most people out there view others. Most people in our society perceive other people as foreign, unknown beings who have no place in their lives (that is, until their paths cross). They view people as *separate* from them, *until* they get to know the other people well enough to consider as *a part of them*. This **separation mindset** is the source of all your social anxiety and relationship problems.

## Separation Mindset: Viewing People as Separate From You

### Characteristics of Separation Mindset

Here are the typical characteristics of someone with a separation mindset:

- You see people as **separate** from you. They have no connection or relation to who you are.
- You are often worried about the **opinions others have of you**.
- When meeting someone new, you are obsessed with **giving the right (first) impressions**, rather than fostering a connection.
- By default, you **do not open yourself up**, nor do you fully give

- your trust to someone, **until** he/she has **proved deserving of it**. This is a safeguard to prevent yourself from ever getting hurt.
- Because of that, you **take time to warm up to people**, before you become at ease around them, and reveal who you really are. Before that happens, you usually project a front that is totally different from how you normally are.
- You see the world as a **cold, dark, and dangerous place** with malicious people out there to hurt you (or others). E.g., If someone approaches you in a foreign land, your first instinct would be to wonder if the person is trying to pick your pocket or rip you off, rather than anything else.
- By default, you **question people's intentions** (especially if it's someone you don't know), because as your parents always say, "*You never know if others have ulterior motives.*" and you prefer to err on the safe side.

## Problems with Separation Mindset

The separation mindset is one that is marked by **fear**. It is pretty much the source of all issues when it comes to social situations *and* relationships. (Note: by relationships, I'm referring to all kinds of relationships, including friendships, business relationships, romantic relationships, familial relationships, etc).

Here are common problems that someone with a separation mindset would face:

1. **It takes time for relationships to build.** As opposed to getting right into the heart of connecting with people right away, there is often a lot of time spent dancing around the edges before you get to know the people better. For people with deep separation mindsets, it takes even longer.

1. **You create a lot of unnecessary tension** for yourself, between yourself and the other person, and for the other person in a relationship.
2. In social situations, **you are often concerned with whether you're giving the right impression**, rather than focusing on the interaction between you and the other person.
3. **You drive away great people and great relationships** (be it potential friends or potential romantic partners), without even knowing it yourself. That's because you erect so many crazy barriers for someone to know you and to get close to you, such that it becomes a pointless endeavor for the other party at the end of the day.
4. **You are often second guessing other people's intentions**, rather than giving them the benefit of the doubt.
5. **You often have problems meeting nice people**, be it friends or romantic partners. For some reason, you often attract fear-based people into your life. (That's because a fear-based mindset attracts fear-based people, as I wrote before in [10 Steps to Attract Authentic Love](#))

Does any of the above apply to you?

## Oneness Mindset: Viewing People as Like Souls To Be Reconnected

The opposite of the separation mindset is the **oneness mindset**, where rather than seeing people as separate from you, you recognize other people are a part of you, and you are all one and the same. It is a mindset marked by **love**.

### Characteristics of Oneness Mindset



- You see people as **connected** with you. Even if you may not know everyone yet, a connection already exists, and you just have to tap into that latent connection when you meet each person.
- You **do not worry yourself with what people think of you**. You know your intentions are pure and that's what matters.
- **Impressions do not concern you**. You know the relationship is beyond the initial impressions, and it's about building a real connection.
- You open up your **authentic, real self** when you're around people you know as well as people you don't know yet. Your heart is worn completely on your sleeve. You do not hide behind a mask or try to be someone you are not.
- The concept of "warming up" to others does not exist. **You get right to connecting with people** when you (first) meet them.
- You see the **world as one**, where everyone is interconnected with each other, separated only by the space between them. Each person serves a role in the grand design, and each role the person serves supports everyone else in the universe.
- By default, everyone gets the **benefit of the doubt** from you, until proven otherwise. You see everyone as having genuine, good intentions in his/her heart, and there is no one out trying to hurt anybody. (An exception to the rule would be people in extremely fear-based consciousness, who have lost their way and resort to hurting others to let themselves be hurt.)

## Benefits of Oneness Mindset

When you embrace the oneness mindset, you will experience quite a paradigm shift in your social relationships.

1. **There is no fear when you are around people**, because you recognize they are all a part of you.
2. Rather than spend time "building" the relationship (acquainting, getting to know the person better, knowing the person's interests, forming trust, etc), you get right to fostering the connection right away. **The notion of time has no significance in the growth of your relationship with others.** You can be meeting people off the bat and becoming great buddies with them.
3. **People love to be around you** because of the energy you exude. At the same time, you thrive in the presence of other wonderful people too. There are no barriers, separators, or distance between you and them, so to speak.
4. **You have little problem attracting good, high consciousness people** into your life. Generous souls, kind angels, supportive spirits; these people keep entering your life one after another.
5. **You are much happier and at ease with yourself**, compared to someone with the separation mindset.
6. You stop worrying about making good first impressions and projecting a certain image of yourself, instead **working on strengthening the connection between you and the other party instead.**

## Shifting from Separation to Oneness Mindset: How to Get Started

If you want to attract authentic people into your life, and if you want to achieve meaningful, fulfilling social relationships, **the oneness mindset is the way to go.**

Under the oneness mindset, the notion of social anxiety doesn't exist, simply because there is no place for it. When you recognize

that people are not separate from you but really are a part of you, suddenly it becomes obvious that all your anxiety in social situations, as well as your anxiety in relationships, **is totally redundant**.

There's no reason to be fearful at all, because others are not separate from you. They never were. It's just like feeling nervous while you're around your best friend; there's no reason to be that way at all.

This guide will help you transit to this new mindset with ease.

## 1. Understand What's Contributing to Your Separation Mindset

If there's a part of you that refuses to let go of the separation mindset, try to understand what's binding you to it. Why are you holding on to a separation mindset? Is it because you have been hurt before by others? Is it because people have said unkind things when you opened up, causing you to go right back into your shell? Is it because people have betrayed your trust before? Or is it simply because that's way you have been brought up?

The separation mindset is what one adopts when one is on guard against others. But in this case, you are guarding yourself from nobody except a figment of your past. That's imaginary and only in your head.

To truly embrace the oneness mindset, you have to recognize that no one is out there to hurt you. You have not been brought into this world to be harmed, betrayed, or violated. You have been brought into this world to be loved, cherished, and embraced. As long as you still hold onto the separation mindset, you make it difficult for yourself to achieve that.

If there have been people who hurt you in the past, it's likely because they were acting from fear. Holding the separation mindset isn't exactly the solution because there will always be fear-based people around (until the world undergoes some dramatic shift anyway). Rather, you should learn to handle such people instead. (Read: [8 Helpful Ways To Deal With Critical People](#), [How to Deal with Dishonest People](#), [How to Deal with Energy Vampires](#)) Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater just because of some off-putting encounters you had in the past.

## 2. Recognize the Beauty of Oneness Mindset

Recognize that by holding on to the separation mindset, you are doing a disservice to people whom you would have connected with otherwise.

### Example: Applying Oneness in Running Personal Excellence

For example, I reckon some of you read PE because you have found some of the articles here helpful to you in some way. (I'd like to take the chance here to sincerely thank you readers for your support all this while, be it by sharing my work, getting my [programs](#) and ebooks, or simply reading what I have to share. Thank you! ♥)

Many of my materials have been created with the oneness mindset in mind. This is why I share my experiences and lessons freely, without prejudice. I write based on what helps people the most, not what makes me look the best in others' eyes. The programs ([Live a Better Life in 30 Days Program](#), [Be a Better Me in 30 Days Program](#)) and forums are also run with the oneness mindset in mind. I try to build a conducive and inclusive culture where there is no judgment - only sharing and support. I'd like to think this is why the PE forums

has such a positive, open, and supportive culture today.

On the other hand, if I had created the site with a separation mindset, it would be totally different. I would be second guessing myself with each article I write, to the point where very few to no articles would ever be posted. I would worry about the kind of impression I portray with each line I write, and shape each article in such a way that would make me look the best, rather than to help the reader. I wouldn't share my personal lessons because people may use them against me. I would write posts that put people (who are against me) down and teach them a lesson, rather than to help others.

With the second approach, the site would probably be very different than it is today. Firstly, the audience that would be drawn to the site would probably be very different. I would probably attract a lot of critical, perhaps even vindictive-type people, who read the site for gossip and trash about others. Secondly, the material here would be about very glossed over aspects of my life, without ever sharing anything deep or insightful. Thirdly, the site would probably have a culture that is unsupportive, fear-based, and envy-driven, rather than of self-empowerment, self-realization, and support.

Do you see what I'm getting at? By embracing the oneness mindset on PE, it has allowed me to attract many wonderful and conscious individuals, as you can see from the site. This is the same thing I experience in my personal life too, because that's the same mindset I adopt. Likewise for you, embracing a oneness mindset will help you to attract more conscious people into your life. If you are already in contact with such people, doing so will further accelerate the process.

## Example: Effects of Oneness During My Travels

Another great example would be my experience during my travels. People often speak of having to be careful when traveling, to be wary of pickpockets and criminals, and to keep people you don't know at bay. While all valid cautions, these are very fear-based thoughts.

During my travels however, I've had the great honor to meet with so many amazing, incredible people everywhere, from Holland, Germany, Paris, Spain, London, Philadelphia, Washington DC, New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. I know some expats who live in some of those countries/cities saying how difficult it is for them to meet people/locals in those places because everyone is so closed up. But I've met the most amazing, open people I've ever known (many of them natives). People who opened up their homes to me, allowed me to stay with them for indefinite periods of time, took time off to show me around the countries/cities, and showered me with so much kindness and generosity that I felt like I was right at home.

I *even* met strangers on the street who were incredibly kind and wonderful to me. One time I was lost in Paris, and I ended up having a chat with the stranger whom I approached for directions. We swung by his place to drink afternoon tea and chat some more, after which he drove me back home. How crazy was that? And I often hear people saying how snobbish and distant the Parisians are! True that as a national culture perhaps, but every country is made up of different people.

There were hundreds of great experiences I had during my travels

borne out of the oneness mindset and I could go on and on and on, but you get the idea.

If I had embraced the separation mindset, none of the above would have happened. Sure, I still met not-so-nice people even when I adopt the oneness mindset. But like I said in Point #1, negative and fear-based people exist everywhere. It's about learning to handle the situation when you face such people, not blocking out everyone with a separation mindset. (See next point.)

### 3. When You Face People with Separation Mindset

Under the oneness mindset, there will still be times when you will meet people with separation mindsets. For example, you can be earnest, open, and upfront, which are all based in oneness, while the other person, with the view of separation, spends the whole time evaluating your actions and keeping you at a safe distance.

#### How to Deal with the Situation

Here, there are two things you can do. You can either **continue to connect with the person within the confines of a separation mindset** (i.e., take your time to build trust, prove your value to the person, etc.) and transit to a oneness approach after a connection is established and trust has been built. Or, you can **forgo the connection** due to the fundamental incompatibility and seek out others who are more compatible with your oneness approach instead.

When dealing with deeply fear-based people, I've noticed that they tend to have many hang-ups. Trying to further the connection feels

like navigating a labyrinth. It feels more like I'm playing a game of tango with them than building a real connection. So I go for the second approach, while sending them love in the process. It may feel like a pity sometimes if you come across potentially nice people who seclude themselves out of fear. I know that I have felt this way before. However, recognize the following: (1) The world has an *infinite number of connections* for us to tap into. For every connection you forgo, new ones will come your way. (2) "Forgoing" toxic or negative connections isn't a bad thing; it simply means you are *incompatible* with these people now and it's better to move on to more compatible ones. (3) When I forgo a connection, I don't see it as a severance of the relationship. It continues to live on in my heart. Likewise, it should be the same for you.

(On a semi-related note, check out: [Why I Parted Ways With My Best Friend of 10 Years](#) and [Top 12 Signs It's Time To Move On From a Relationship](#))

## See Your Oneness Mindset as a Filter

Another good thing about your oneness mindset is it serves as a filter that helps you to sieve out people with incompatible values and bring you the ones who *are* compatible. With a separation mindset, you can only attract people with separation mindsets. With a oneness mindset, you will attract people with similar values.

Living by the oneness mindset for the past few years, I have since released a lot of fear-based people from my life, and ushered in many wonderful, love-based people.

## Facing Malicious People

This may be obvious, but the oneness mindset wouldn't apply if you



are dealing with bad eggs (such as molesters, murders, rapists, delinquents, etc). These people probably have goodness somewhere in their hearts, but they lost their way somewhere along their paths and became deeply entrenched in fear-based consciousness instead. This has resulted in them doing things that inflict pain upon others. When faced with such people, using the separation mindset may be a more logical approach.

## Reflect

Personally, I use my encounters with fear-based people as an opportunity for self-reflection. I believe there is always something to learn from everyone in my life. I also believe people cross paths in life for a reason.

Hence, when I do come across such a person, I ask myself these few questions: (1) Is there something about me that drew the person into my life? (2) What can I learn from this person/encounter? (3) Are there parts of me that still hold onto the fear-based, separation mindset? If so, what are they, and why? (Refer to Point #1.) I then process these accordingly and let them go.

As you do that over and over, gradually you will meet less and less fear-based people, and more and more love-based people. That's because your reality reflects what's in your consciousness, and when you release your fear, the fearful people will stop gravitating toward you.

## Final Words

In conclusion, if you have social anxiety, or if you want to increase the quality of your relationships, the **oneness mindset** is the way to go.

I've previously written about the elements of oneness in bits and pieces via the articles on PE, but this is the first time I've really put it down in a proper, full-length article. Many of the things I write in my relationships or people-related posts are based in oneness.

A great litmus test to see whether you're wholly applying the oneness mindset would be to compare your attitudes and behaviors toward your best friend(s) vs. strangers. Do you treat both groups of people with the same openness, trust, faith, and rigor? Is there any occasion, any occasion at all, where you discriminate in your behavior between one person and another? If you can answer "yes" to the first question and "no" to the second one all the time, you're definitely applying the oneness mindset. If not, there's still some undercurrent beliefs of separation at work there which you may not have been aware of. Address them accordingly using Point #1.

I hope you have found this piece useful. Share it with anyone who you know has social anxiety issues or who wants to further the quality of his/her relationships with others.

Here are some related posts:

- [10 Useful Tips To Make New Friends](#)
- [How to Have More Best Friends: My Heartfelt Guide](#)
- [Are You Emotionally Generous?](#)

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# ABOUT

Hi, I'm Celestine Chua, the founder of [Personal Excellence](#), one of the top personal development blogs in the world with readers from over 200 countries/territories.

The central goal of my work is to help you achieve your highest potential and create your best life. If you like this ebook, you will love my free material at [PersonalExcellence.co](#). Some articles you will find there are:

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