

Why friendships matter

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(HealthDay)—Your calendar might be filled with play-dates for your kids, but it's important to ink in some get-togethers of your own.

Existing [friendships](#) may take a back seat to other priorities, and making new friends might seem like mission impossible, but research suggests that friends may be more important to well-being than even romantic and [family relationships](#). Not having this kind of [social connection](#) can be as damaging as smoking, overdoing alcohol or not exercising. Friendship is even linked to longevity.

Having friends can:

- Boost your mood.
- Motivate you to reach goals.
- Provide support through all phases of your life.
- Enhance feelings of self-worth.
- Add purpose to your life.

There's no need to limit yourself to the parents of your kids' friends or classmates. By being social in other ways, you're more likely to meet adults who have similar interests to yours.

Be social to get social:

- Get involved in community activities or events through your library or school.
- Take a course in a subject that interests you.
- Volunteer for a cause you care about.
- Reconnect with old friends through social media sites or your

alumni association.

Once you've met new people, it takes some effort to develop friendships. Besides e-mails and texts, set up face-to-face dates—the best way to ensure that your friendships grow. Often the difference between a friendship and an acquaintance is the level of intimacy—knowing key things about each other such as values, goals and even struggles.

So open up to the other person a little at a time. Hopefully he or she will follow suit.

To maintain a friendship, nurture it by being positive rather than judgmental. Listen and respond to your friend's needs, but don't offer unsolicited advice. And above all resist the urge to turn a friendship into a competition over who has a better job, fancier home or smarter kids.

More information: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has a thoughtful self-help guide on [making and keeping friends](#).

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