

# HOW TO MAKE THE FRIENDS YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

And Not Lose The Ones You Already Have



by Pete Cafarchio

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### **Bonus Video Clip**

As a reader of this eBook, you have access to an online video of my thoughts that went into writing this eBook. This free video is only accessible through this eBook link. It's my way of saying "thanks," and a way for us to better connect with each other. Simply go to <https://youtu.be/hswpqwYZToU>  
See you there!

*Proverbs 4:7*

*The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.  
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.*

## INTRODUCTION-

There are people in this world who are popular, naturally friendly, well-adjusted, and seem to make friends easily. Socializing is one of their natural strong suits.

This E-book is not for them.

It's for the rest of us who, like me, have had to learn to socialize the hard way through trial and error.

If you're in that group (the *rest* of us) to one degree or another then read on. It will help you get an understanding of the basic levels of friendship and how to progress through different stages. You'll also get plenty of practical action steps to improve things no matter where you are.

I wish I knew these things when as a young adult. I had a sincere desire to make friends and be a positive person, but my lack of understanding and unrealistic expectations drove a lot of potentially good friends away from me.

I don't want you to make the same mistakes, so I've captured some wisdom and experience from 50 years in this E-book for your benefit.

It's important to remember that change doesn't happen overnight. This will take time, effort, patience, and practice. But I promise that if you apply these principles they will make a difference in your social life. Over time they will yield more friendships and better quality relationships.

## THE FOUR STAGES OF FRIENDSHIP-

First, it's important to get a basic working knowledge of how friendships develop. Good friendships don't just "happen," and they can't be forced to develop quickly. All relationships progress through stages.

You may not have thought about these stages in the past because they just show up naturally over time, often while you're unaware. In childhood, school systems have a way of moving you from one phase to another. But now that you're an adult on your own, you're going to have to be much more intentional, and this basic understanding will be foundational for you to have social success.

The four stages are 1) Acquaintance, 2) Peer friend, 3) Close Friend, and 4) Best friend. Let's take a closer look at each one.

## Acquaintance

All friendships initially start out as an acquaintance. This is someone with whom you share and know “public” information (facts) about. You may interact with them, but don’t really consider them to be your friend. It takes just a few times seeing someone to consider them an acquaintance but that person may or may not move past this stage in your association with them.

## Peer Friend

This is someone with whom you discover common interests, activities, and concerns. You may even learn a little about each other’s goals, wishes, or opinions. It takes some time to develop the status of a peer because it implies that you have encountered the person on numerous occasions and have some type of involvement with them. As you discover who does and does not share your values and goals, it’s natural for fewer people to progress past this stage.

## Close friend

A close friend is someone you would consider part of your inner circle and with whom you share some similar life goals and values. These are people who know the most about your life, and have likely been through a few ups and downs with you. Close friends are generally those you see and talk to the most often.

## Best friend

Lastly, a best friend is someone with whom you have built up a strong level of trust and could share almost everything with. The development of a best friend relationship takes time and experience together; it cannot happen overnight. It implies a commitment to support one another, and requires honesty, loyalty, and discretion from both parties.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Maintainable #</b>	<b>What you disclose</b>	<b>Level of trust needed</b>
<b>Acquaintance</b>	Unlimited	Facts	Little to none
<b>Peer friend</b>	Many	Opinions	Some
<b>Close friend</b>	Small number	Goals, some weaknesses	Much more
<b>Best friend</b>	Very few	Dreams, intimate details	Highest level

Figure 1

## IT'S LIKE PLANTING A CROP

One way to understand the friendship stages is to compare them to the growth of a plant. I like this metaphor because there are so many other great principles for success that spring from it, as you'll see in the next section.

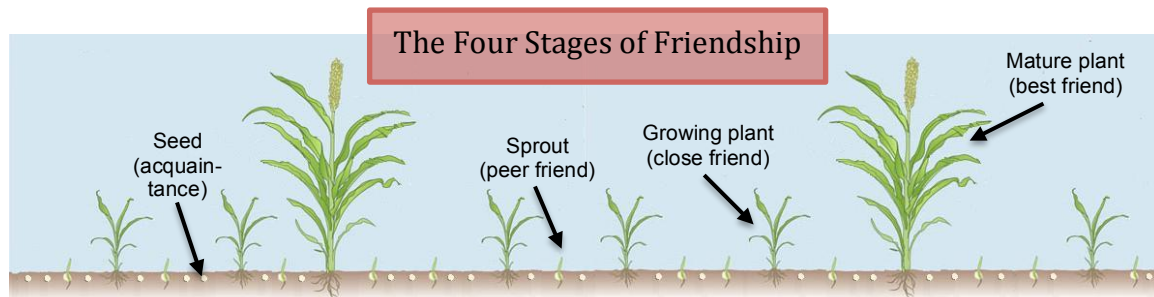


Figure 2

An acquaintance is like a seed. You plant lots of them in the ground, but you really don't see and or know which ones will spout and which won't.

A peer friend is like a small sprout. They all start off as acquaintances, but now they are visible above ground. They are not mature plants, and not all of them will survive the weather, pests and other challenges.

A close friend is like a strong growing plant. You invest more in these relationships, and you water, feed, and care for them. But not all of them will advance to the next stage.

A best friend is a fully mature plant that gives a crop of more seeds. Strong and healthy, they withstand the tests of life, and stand out above all the other plants.

### Lessons

Here are some dynamics that accompany the stages of growth for further insight.

**Lesson #1. The numbers shrink as you progress through the stages.** As you move from stage to stage, the pool of available "candidates" gets increasingly smaller. For instance, you could be in a room of 100 acquaintances, but you'll only really enjoy the company of a percentage of them to move into the peer friend stage. This is completely natural and OK, but you can (and should) still be pleasant and friendly to everyone.

Then as you get to know your tribe of peer friends better, you'll discover that some don't share your values, and some are untrustworthy or they gossip, and some are

too busy and just aren't open to the idea of forming deeper friendships. Again, this is perfectly OK.

Even among your close friends, tough times will reveal only one or two that stand with you through thick and thin to become a best friend.

**Lesson #2.** Just as the soil can't sustain too many plants, **people do not have the capacity for unlimited friendships.** Relationships take time, effort, and emotional energy. As responsibilities and time demands increase, it's just a matter of fact that some individuals won't be available for a close friendship. Under other circumstances you might have really hit it off with a certain person, but it's just not going to happen right now.

Don't take it personally and don't get too aggressive trying to befriend them. Keep practicing kindness, but move on and look for other possibilities.

**Lesson #3. Some friendships don't last forever.** Just as a plant does not live forever, friendships don't always last. Life happens – people move away, illnesses and accidents disrupt lifestyles, serious dating relationships shift priorities with your other friends, etc. And misunderstandings, betrayed trust, and foolish decisions can hamper budding friendships as well. While unpleasant, it's part of life, so go into this with your eyes open and don't be shocked when it happens.

Sometimes, in the providence of God, you'll have a friend for a specific purpose or season in your life. When that season is over, the friendship may go on the back burner. That's OK, too. You don't have to try to keep it going at the same level in perpetuity. Just make sure you both communicate that and set proper expectations.

**Lesson #4. Not everything was meant to be.** Some potential friendships should be avoided (bad company corrupts good morals), and sometimes the chemistry just isn't there. If you don't have enough common interests you'll never have a sustainable friendship. It's OK. Just accept it.

Repeat after me, "I don't need to be close friends with everyone." In fact, it's a sign of a good self-image if you have the confidence to just move on instead of feeling pressured to always fit in and compromise.

## KEYS FOR FRIENDSHIP SUCCESS -

Now that you understand the four stages of friendship and the four lessons, you can start to intentionally practice some habits for better social success.

### **Key # 1** If you plant a lot of seeds, you'll reap a big harvest.

The "seeds" you're going to sow are acts of friendliness. Kind words, just saying "Hi," showing an interest in others, and being helpful are simple things you can do every day to show people that you're a friendly person.

Take it from the ancient wisdom of King Solomon who said, "*A man that hath friends must show himself friendly...*" (Proverbs 18:24a).

You already know there's going to be a drop-off in numbers as your progress through the various stages. And it takes a lot of acquaintances (and time) to produce just one close friend, much less a best friend. Therefore, you'll improve your odds by being as friendly as you can to as many people as possible. Your future relationships all begin at the acquaintance stage, so start planting those seeds now to get that future harvest.

**Exercise:** Try to remember the impressions you had when you first met one of your close friends. Think about it for a minute.

At the acquaintance stage, no one looks like a close friend – not yet anyway. So treat everyone well and don't discount them. You never know who will turn out to be a close or best friend.

**Key 2. You reap what you sow.** If you plant corn seeds, you'll reap a crop of corn, not wheat. Likewise if you plant seeds of unfriendliness, you won't get a crop of friends in return. If you're too busy to acknowledge people with a friendly "hello," don't be surprised if others don't greet you either.

From time to time I'll meet someone who complains they don't have enough friends. But then to watch them interact with others it becomes obvious why that's the case. They aren't being friendly and have sunk into self-pity and a victim mentality. No one wants to be around someone like that except other dysfunctional people, or "fixers" who are looking for their next "project" to help. Not good.

The story goes of a woman who was checking out the housing market in preparation for moving to a new town. While she was pumping gas at the filling station she asked another woman if this was a friendly town. "No way," she replied. "The people here are cold and calloused. We've lived here for five years and have hardly made any friends. In fact we are seriously thinking of moving soon to a better location. Good luck!" Curious but undaunted she asked the next customer who pulled up the same question. "Oh Yes. We love this town. We've met so many warm, generous people, and in a short time have come to consider it our second home. You'll love it here!"



It was the same town but the two people had completely different experiences. What was the difference? Each one was receiving back the same amount of friendliness that they were giving out to others.

**Key 3. You reap *more* than you sow.** Good or bad. Crops multiply by producing more seeds. In the same way, your reputation goes before you and pre-announces to everyone what kind of person you are – friendly, self-centered, kind, a gossip, interesting, rude, outgoing, nervous, generous, etc. People talk to each other, and they'll tell others about the way you treated them whether good, bad, or indifferent.

If you happen to have gotten off on a wrong foot and have developed an unfriendly reputation, it's never too late to change. Just start doing right and things will turn around in time.

**Key 4. It takes time for things to grow** – don't rush it. Seeds need time to germinate, sprout, develop roots, and grow. Friendships take time too. If you try to rush the process or appear “desperate” for closer friendships you'll only alienate people. Give it time and have faith in the process.

## **BALANCE AND VARIETY-**

I'm surprised at how often I get asked the question, *“What's the right number of friends that I need?”*

Maybe you've heard some kind of “formula” from someone you respect. Something like “just have 1 or 2 close friends and keep everyone else at arm's length.” Or “I always try to have 5 close friends at any one time.”

Although well meaning, that kind of advice might not be helpful for you. Consider these two different people and their friendships “profile”:

**Emily** has a very high capacity for maintaining social interactions, and thrives on the energy that new relationships bring. She has a total of 400 friends. You can see from figure 3 that most are acquaintances, but she also has a high number peer friends. She has 7 close friends and 3 BFs in her “inner circle.”

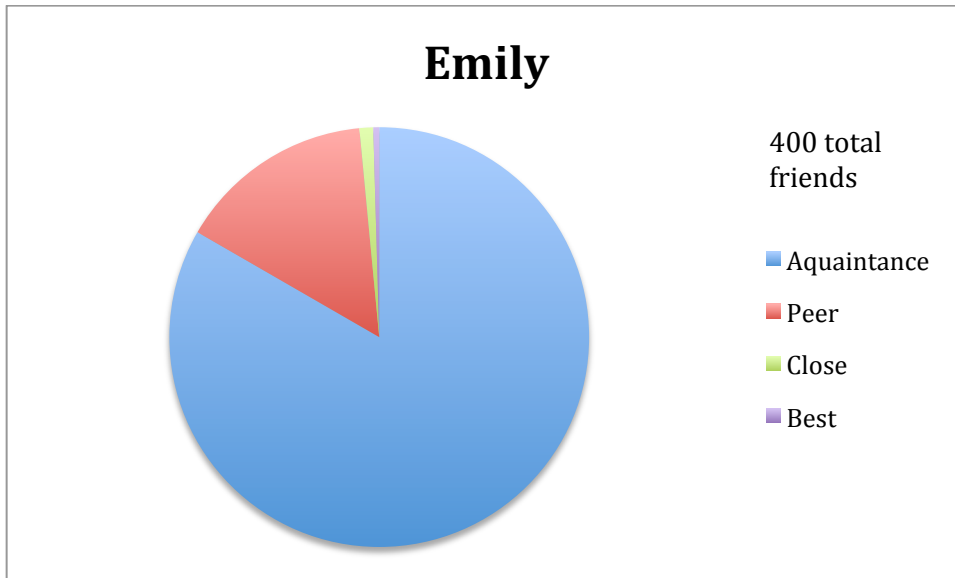


Figure 3

**Jim** finds socializing to be an effort and very draining. He has a smaller circle of total friends (52), but as a percentage, Jim prefers close friendships. He likes consistency and predictability, and keeps his friends for a very long time.

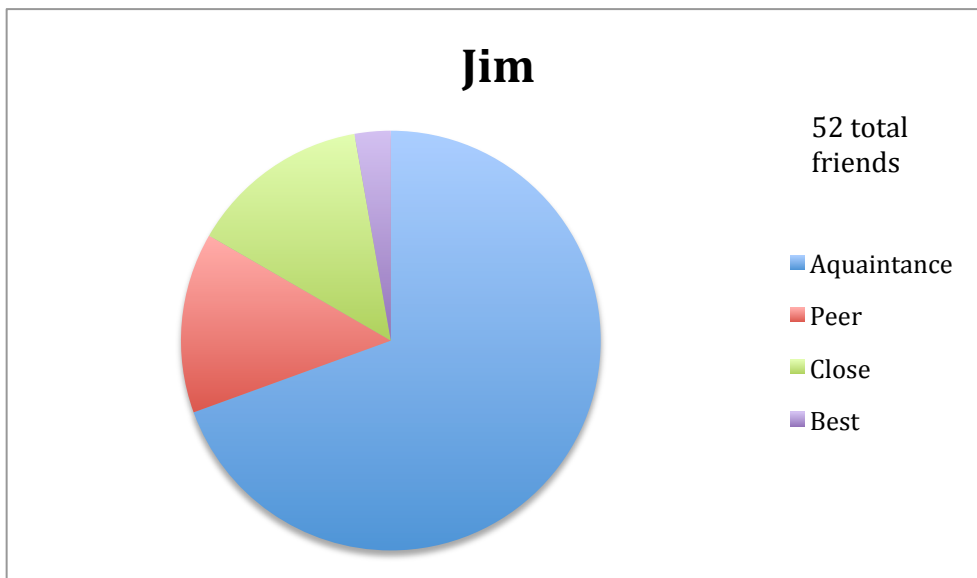


Figure 4

Which person is happier? Which one is right? They are both right, because Jim and Emily are two very different people with different needs.

The truth is there *is no "correct" formula*. Depending on the way God made you and what's going on in your life, your need for different types of friends will vary. What works for one person might be a disaster for another.

I tend to get energized by socializing. I like large groups – the more the merrier – and when I have free time I like to hang out with my old friends or meet new, interesting people. My wife, Lynn, is the opposite. She’s very cheery and a great conversationalist, but at the end of the day she just wants to curl up and read a book in order to recharge. Learning about our different needs and styles helps us better accommodate one another, and has helped us have a happier marriage.

The key is being comfortable with the way you are. So if someone tells you their secret formula for the ideal friendship mix, just nod politely and tell them you’re happy they found what works for them.

## TWO PITFALLS AND A WARNING-

### Comparison

For some reason it’s common to identify an area where we have low or moderate ability and then compare ourselves to someone who happens to be an expert. The result is feeling inadequate and demoralized - it’s a real confidence killer.

My older brother, Johnny, is a charmer. He’s outgoing, funny, confident, and had big dimples when he was a kid making him the “mascot” of our neighborhood. He’ll still strike up a conversation with any stranger, and can quickly get them to open up to him.

Growing up in his shadow posed some challenges for me. No matter how hard I tried I never felt I could measure up in the same way, socially. And the more I tried to be like him, the more awkward things got. That led to me telling myself that I couldn’t socialize well. Which, if you know me today, just isn’t true at all.

The same might be true for you. Have you compared yourself to a very high standard and come up short? If so here are some things to tell yourself to help put things into perspective.

1) You probably couldn’t *handle* being highly popular, and you probably wouldn’t enjoy it either. We all have different capacities to manage friendships at different levels. Being socially popular takes a lot of time - time that you probably would prefer to spend on other things. And that’s fine.

2) Your talents point the way to your purpose – If you’re an introverted, detailed person who loves to focus on concrete facts rather than on people, chances are that your life purpose isn’t going to be in role that requires a high level of socializing and relational nuance.

3) High visibility brings it's own set of problems and constraints, so don't envy that popular person *too* much. They are always under pressure to remember multiple conversations, personal details, and the latest social politics that can change quickly. They need to be guarded about expressing their true opinions, and they face jealousy from others because of their popularity.

So instead of trying to be someone you're not, let's focus on getting you to be the best *you* that you can be.

Get comfy in your own skin. Be happy for other people who aren't like you. Likewise, you need to accept people who aren't as socially advanced as you are because they are struggling, too. Take these lessons that you're learning and turn them into empathy. It can be a cruel world out there, and we all need some kindness and help to get along.

*"Be who you is.  
'Cause if you ain't  
who you is,  
then you is who  
you ain't"*  
-Harry Hein

### Unrealistic expectations

The second pitfall is unrealistic expectation. You need to understand what is appropriate at each level of friendship, and adjust your expectations accordingly.

Wrong expectations can take on one or more of these forms:

- 1) Underestimating the amount of time it takes to progress through the friendship stages.

It's NOT realistic to think you can move from acquaintance to close friend in a matter of days. Although that does happen every once in a while, it's not something you can plan on nor should you ever expect it. And forcing things will only serve to alienate good prospective friends.

- 2) Overestimating the number of relationships you can successfully maintain.

It's NOT realistic to think you can have a large number of close friends. Period. Banish that one from your mind.

- 3) Forgetting that other people have issues, fears, and limits just like you do.

It's NOT realistic to think that if people don't immediately like you that there's something wrong with you. Even though you might think this is being humble, it's actually rooted in insecurity. It's not all about you, so avoid the temptation to have a pity-party.

## Warning: no one person can meet all of your social needs

The truth is, you need all kinds of friends in your life. A healthy balance includes some friends for hobbies and activities, some for conversation, some to challenge you intellectually, some to be a great listener, some for humor, etc.

Even if you find someone who is a great match in many areas, you still shouldn't put too much relational expectation on one person - not even your spouse or your best friend. It's your responsibility to cultivate and maintain friendships at all four stages, and trying to have all your needs met through just one or two people isn't fair to them. And you could be headed down the path toward [emotional dependency](#).

If making friends is a struggle for you, you'll be tempted to pull back when you have a few good friendships. But you still need to keep sowing those seeds of friendliness. Remember Lesson #3. There is usually a drop off in relationships. You don't want to have all your friendship needs met through just one or two people because if and when they eventually *do* drop off you're going to be in a deficit position.

Financial investors use something called the principle of "diversification." Meaning they put their money in several different types of investments. That way if one endeavor does poorly (for instance, real estate) hopefully some of the others will be doing better (like energy stocks, precious metals, bonds, or foreign currencies).

If you make it a point to be regularly sowing seeds at the acquaintance level and watering your peer friendships with friendliness and attention, then you'll have a pool of friendships to draw from if one of your close or best friend relationships drops off.

## **PRACTICAL TIPS-**

Following are some practical tips to help you along your journey. Some are very simple, and others might be more of a challenge for you. Start with just two or three that you resonate with, and consciously practice them for a few weeks. When you feel you have those down pat, move on to two or three others.

### **- Give people your name when you greet them**

"Hi, my name is \_(your name)\_. What's yours?" Sounds simple, but people forget to do this. Remember names and refer to people by their name the next time you see them. Not good at remembering? Jot it down as soon as you finish talking with them.

If the other person asks your name first, and asks if you prefer a nickname, (for instance if you're wearing a nametag that says James), and they ask if you prefer James or Jim, don't say "whatever you want – I'm not picky." You're announcing to the world that you have no opinions or sense of identity. If you truly don't care, just pick one or the other (right now – just do it) and stick with it. And assert it. "Please, call me Jim." If they forget, just politely repeat it again "It's Jim, thanks."

**- Reach out and offer to shake their hand.**

Firm, but not too firm. It shows confidence, and helps them build trust with you faster.

**- Smile!**

Even if you don't feel like it. People respond positively and are attracted to confidence. And you can always act confident even if you're scared and nervous. "Fake it 'til you make it," really does apply here.

Want to know a little secret? Most other people are just as nervous meeting new people as you are. If you're smiling and introducing yourself, you'll appear more confident and they'll be subconsciously drawn to you.

**- Don't ignore hygiene and etiquette.**

Fresh breath, no offensive smells, clean clothing, neat hair, chew with your mouth closed, etc. Nothing says "clueless" like poor grooming or bad manners.

**- Learn to make small talk**

This is one that I wish I learned much earlier in life. I used to look down on the "surface-y" nature of small talk. Being a more intense and deep person, I wanted to quickly move on to meaningful conversation and had little patience for chit-chat. But that's because I didn't understand the four stages or realize the time it takes to build trust.

Small talk is entirely appropriate at the acquaintance stage, and since all friendships start there you need to learn to do it. With a little practice, most people can get adequately competent at it. If you need help, ask if you can shadow one of your friends who does it well, and listen carefully.

Small talk is an easy way for people to "dip their toe in the water" and size you up to see if they'd like to take things further.

**- Remember this simple acrostic.**

R – Really

A – All

P – People

P – Prefer

O – Others

R – Reflecting

T – Themselves

In other words, try to find common ground with people, and frame your discussions in terms they will understand and that allow them to be seen in the best light. Try to understand their world and mindset. Practice this and you'll go a long way in life.

#### - Don't flirt

Don't flirt, don't talk about how you're into someone else, and don't ask if someone is into you. All of this is inappropriate and best left out of your conversations, unless of course you *want* people to think you're still in high school.

#### - Find common friends that you know

At its essence, making friends is an exercise in trust. How much can I trust this person? Will they accept me for who I am? How much of my true self will I reveal?

One way to accelerate the trust-building process is to find common friends. If I'm friends with and respect Chris, and Chris has accepted you, then it makes it a lot easier for me to accept you as well. It shortens the cycle we all have to go through. Of course I still need to make my own judgment calls, but Chris already did some of the hard work for me. So if you leverage this simple dynamic, you'll move along much more quickly.

#### - Assume that people will like you.

This is one of the most powerful tips on this list. But how can you assume that *everyone* will like you if it's a fact that some people just won't?

Every time you meet someone new the future is completely unknown. Will you vibe? Will you have things in common? There's no way of telling yet.

There is something you can control, though, and that's your attitude. You can assume that the interaction will be a positive one. And why not? If the odds are 50/50, it's surely better to go in with a good attitude. You will project confidence and good nature, and people will naturally be drawn to you.

On the flip side, you'll drive people away if you go into every new interaction with only the worst assumptions in the back of your mind. Others will read that you're insecure and are throwing yourself a pity party - qualities no one like to hang around with.

Some people think it's "safer" to assume the worst. That way they won't experience the disappointment of rejection if things don't work out. But what they don't realize is that they are actually sabotaging their own efforts.

So do yourself a favor, increase your odds, and assume people will like you. The more you practice this, you'll realize that you really do have the power of choice in the matter.

### - Go with your gut

If something just doesn't feel right about the other person and your feel uncomfortable, don't take things any farther. Keep it at the acquaintance level and move on. God wired you with intuition for a reason – listen to it. And don't take on the role of a “rescuer,” – that's a formula for a lifetime of grief and frustration.

### - Don't pigeonhole people

People with varied interests and perspectives help to round us out and bring depth to our lives. Be careful not to write people off just because they're different than you. Some of my most interesting friendships have come from people I never thought I'd get along with at first.

I met my Ukrainian friend, Pyotr, at the fitness gym. At first meeting we didn't have much in common – he lays tile for a living, used to be a boxer in the Russian Navy, speaks broken English, and is physically pretty imposing. But as I practiced friendliness, we warmed up to each other and found that we enjoyed each other's company. Our families have spent time together for holiday dinners, and he's just a good guy to be with to relax and hang out.

Through that friendship I've learned a wealth about Russian culture, the promise of America through an immigrant's eyes, and how blessed I've been in my own upbringing. Pyotr also taught me some better gym workout techniques, and I've taught him some English and small business negotiation tips.

### - Handling a snub or rejection.

If things don't work out the way you'd hoped, and the other person actually snubs you (which is rare but it does happen) just move on and decide not to take it personally. It's their loss.

It's a cold reality that many people in this world are hurting, self-centered, and cruel. So what? When you find someone like that, check them off your list of candidates. Now you're just one step closer to getting to the good friends that are out there. Just keep spreading your goodness. You don't want to waste it on people who won't receive it anyway.

The truth is you're going to have to develop some amount of resiliency and not be too sensitive. Just make a commitment not to treat people poorly in return.

**Mega life bonus tip:** As you move on from a snubbed rejection, say a quick prayer for that person under your breath - “Lord I don't know what makes that person so apparently cold and hard. Maybe they're just having a bad day. Whatever the cause, I pray that you'd bless them with a tangible sense of your love and caring, and that whatever is getting them down would be turned around for good in their life. Amen.” Over and over I have seen this simple act have amazing results on both the prayer target and the pray-er. Don't be surprised if in the near future you get another chance to show kindness and friendliness to that same person.



### - Never pass up an opportunity to be friendly

People judge you by your actions and appearance – not by your intent. “I didn’t smile and say ‘hi’ because I was pre-occupied with something important. But they should know that I like them anyway.” Wrong. They can’t read your mind – they can only judge what they see and hear from you. In that last scenario, the only thing they heard was – “I’m not going to acknowledge you because I’m not friendly.” So always make a conscious effort to put a smile on your face, make brief eye contact, and greet people.

### - Don’t reveal too much too soon

People have to warm up to you and it takes a few encounters for them to do that. If it helps you, think about people having a personal “bubble” around them – a safe zone. And respect it. Don’t try to get too intense too soon.

Nothing screams “NEEDY” like dumping your emotional baggage on an acquaintance or even peer friend. Even with close friends you can overdo it.

### - Keep it positive.

No one wants to hear Debbie Downer’s sad stories. Avoid talking about health issues, deaths, or anything else depressing. If you really do need a friend to help you through a tough time then seek out a close or best friend, or a counselor. And consider the setting – usually it can wait for an appropriate time.

### - Take a genuine interest in people.

This sounds simple, but I’m amazed how rarely it happens. Ask simple questions about people’s lives to get to know them better. Where did they grow up? Family? Hobbies? Music groups they like? Academic major? Current job? Favorite sports teams? And show a genuine interest in their answers.

No one likes meeting someone for the first time and then hearing them [go on and on talking about themselves](#). “I think... I like... I, I, I, me, me, me.....” Yuck!

### - Be ready with a few, concise facts about yourself

People need to have something to remember you by. One of those should be somewhat memorable – a unique nickname, a cool project you’re working on, etc. The key here is to stand out, but not too much. Of course as you progress through the stages, your true uniqueness can shine more and more, but for introductory acquaintances you don’t want to come across as being too far outside the norm – that just scares people. Remember, this is new territory for them as well and you’re trying to build trust.

- While it’s great to be interested in others, **you’ll have to show some personal vulnerability** if you want to move past the acquaintance or peer friendship stage. People can relate to failures more than successes, so don’t only show your best accomplishments. You can do this in a light, fun way – it doesn’t have to turn into a public confession project.

Said with a grin, some of my favorites include:

“Hey, I resemble that remark!”

“Guilty as charged”

“I’ll have to plead the fifth on that one”

and the short and simple “D’Oh!”

- **Get feedback from a trusted friend.** It’s often very hard to see how you come across to other people. So if you’re serious about improving, tell one of your closer friends that you’re trying to develop your social skills, and that you’d like their honest feedback. Pick one specific habit or skill from this Practical Tips section and then give them permission to point it out to you (discretely of course) if they notice you falling short during a social situation.

## SUMMARY-

Most people want and need close friends. But in order to have close friends, you have to practice skills that will help you make more acquaintances. Having more acquaintances leads to having more peer friends, and they will provide the base from which your close friends will come.

Understanding which stage you are at in your different relationships will help you know what level of interaction is appropriate. You can always be friendly to people, but the way that friendliness is expressed changes at different levels.

If you’re not naturally gifted at socializing, it’s O.K. Most people aren’t, so don’t compare yourself to someone who’s an expert. By practicing some of the skills and tips listed here you can improve your ability to socialize. The more effort you put into it, the better your outcome will be.

And finally, be patient. Be patient with others and with yourself. Relationships take time.

I hope this Ebook gave you some encouragement and practical ideas to keep reaching out and improve your social skills. If you have any feedback, please share it by contacting me at [www.petecoaching.com](http://www.petecoaching.com).