

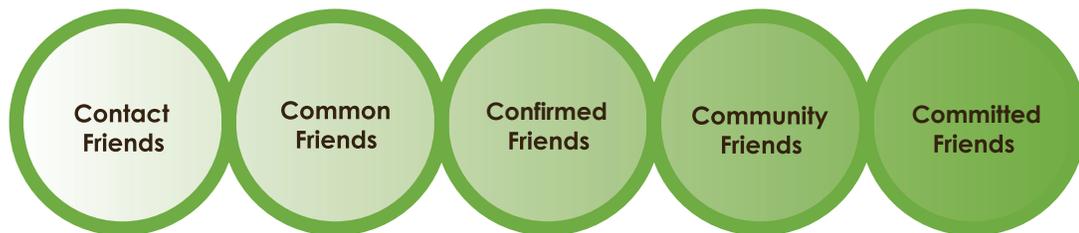
Shasta's Circles of Connectedness™ Worksheet for Personal Evaluation

As discussed at length in *Friendships Don't Just Happen!*, "Shasta's Circles of Connectedness" helps us see which Circles most need our attention as we seek relational fulfillment.

Summary

This continuum of friendship begins on the left with the most casual of friends and moves to the right as the bond and commitment deepens. While there are some parameters to each circle, how we categorize our friends is subjective, based on our own sense of the bond between us based primarily on intimacy and regularity.

Shasta's Circles of Connectedness



Contact Friends: We are friendly whenever we see them, but we don't see them much outside of our shared context. We are linked to them because we share something in common—we attend the same church, went to school together, both know the same mutual friend, or play together on a local sports team. Contact Friends are not the same as "all acquaintances," though. While we may know the names of all twenty people in our association meeting or at church, these are the 2 or 3 that we gravitate to when we see them in that context.

Common Friends: We intentionally spend time with these friends, getting to know them more, but our friendship is still based primarily on one shared commonality. The bond can develop because we see each other in a weekly moms' group, are working on a shared project, sing in the same choir, or belong to the same club, or because we are frequently in the same social circle. But we are more than Contact Friends because we are initiating time together, having long conversations, and seeing each other on purpose.

Confirmed Friends is next on the continuum, and I'll return to this Circle in a minute: There are two things that begin to shift when we cross that center Circle: (1) the **regularity** with which we spend time together and (2) the **broadening and deepening** of what we share together.

Community Friends: With Community Friends we intentionally spend regular time together beyond the area we have in common. With Community Friends we have crossed the lines of our original relationship boundaries, and now it feels normal to invite them to a concert on short

notice, check in with them about their weekend plans, or see if they are interested in starting a book club with us. This is where a “work friend” turns into a “friend outside of work,” too. If one of us changed jobs, we’d still have other structures in place to support our friendship. We are likely meeting important people in their lives and revealing life stories beyond the original bonding subject.

Commitment Friends: We intimately and consistently share our lives with each other; our commitment extends beyond the things that hold us in common. This far-right Circle is reserved for those best friends whom we regularly share our feelings with and whose lives we’re involved in in meaningful ways. We may have bonded as Common Friends because of our kids or shared work, but these are now the friends we are most committed to. They could switch jobs, get married, change interests, or move away, but we would still be in each other's lives. These are the women we will sacrifice for and love through any crisis.

Now, go back to the middle:

Confirmed Friends: We share a history with these friends that has bonded us, but our connection is not regular anymore. These are the friends that we used to live close to and love deeply, but we only talk to them occasionally now. This middle Circle is reserved for the friends we have a deep connection with. At one point we would have placed them on the right side of the continuum—but we no longer have the regular contacts with them that we do with our Commitment Friends. They are not engaged in our day-to-day lives and in the creation of new memories together. But these are the women we know we can pick up with where we left off, although our commonality is now more in the past than it is in the present.

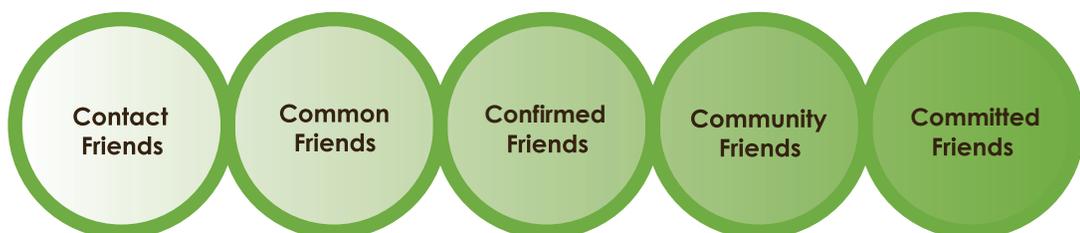
We all tend to find that some circles of friends come to us more naturally, but we all need people in every circle. Some of us love socializing and have tons of Contact Friends, but have a harder time building enough consistency with a few to move into the real intimacy of being Commitment Friends; others of us have a few close friends but hate going out and meeting people.

What’s important to realize is that for friends to become Community and Commitment Friends (on the far right side of the continuum) they must start as Contact Friends (on the left side). All friendships start on the left side no matter how much we’re attracted to each other. It’s less about simply discovering the right friend, and more about developing the right friendship.

Evaluation Tips

1. Start by writing the names of all your current friends along the continuum. Take the first name that comes into your head and ask yourself, “Where does this person fit on this continuum right now based on the relationship we currently share?”

Shasta's Circles of Connectedness



2. Then, open your journal and write down some observations. Don't judge them or talk yourself out of them—simply write down any thoughts that will give words to this visual picture.

- What surprised you as you wrote the names of your friends?

- Which Circle(s) do you want to celebrate for how meaningful/full/strong it is right now?

- Which Circle(s) do you wish were fuller/stronger/more meaningful?

- Which Circle is the hardest for you to develop? Why do you think that is?

- What other observations or insights do you have as you look at your continuum?

3. For each Circle, finish the sentence "In this Circle I most hunger for..." Whether it involves numbers, names, qualities, or anything else. Simply capture what you most hope for in that area. What do you think you need? What do you want for that category?

- Contact: _____
- Common: _____
- Confirmed: _____
- Community: _____
- Commitment: _____

4. Now put a star next to the Circle that expresses your greatest loneliness right now. On which one do you most need to focus?

Then, look to the left of your starred Circle to see which Circles contains the best pool of friends that you can develop into the Circle you have starred.

For example, if your desired Circle is Commitment Friends, do you have enough women in the Community Circle that, if a little more vulnerability and/or consistency were fostered, could eventually turn into Commitment Friends? If not, do you need to go into your Confirmed Circle to see if there is anyone you can talk to weekly to eventually feel like a Commitment Friend? Or, is there a Common Friend you can start asking to do more with you outside of your area in common in hopes that she can turn into a Community Friend? Or do you need to meet some new people and start with them as Contact Friends in order to eventually have the Commitment Friends you crave?



5. Write down the names of a couple of women on your continuum that you'd be willing to try to spend more time with. And try to jot down a few ideas for things you'd like to invite them to do with you. Choose a date by which you'll reach out to them.

Name

Possible Activities

My Deadline for Initiating

6. Finally, place your hand on your continuum and end with this affirmation:

"I look forward to engaging in more meaningful relationships."

Additional Resources:

- Shasta's book *Friendships Don't Just Happen!* Devotes two chapters to examples, definitions, and helpful principles for evaluation.
- Shasta's blog post "What Types of Friends Do You Need?" (<http://www.girlfriendcircles.com/blog/index.php/2011/09/what-types-of-friends-do-you-need/>) links to 5 short YouTube videos where she explains each of the 5 circles.

