

Skills for Finding Friends

DBT: Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

Making new friends can be tough - especially for adults. This worksheet will help you build friendships by finding “third places” that are a good fit for you, identify and hop into conversations with potential friends gracefully, and strengthen new connections.

Where can you regularly interact with people?

Perhaps the most effective way to make new friends is to show up and interact with people again and again. **Think about places you could go over and over** (or already do) to interact with people (outside of work). These are often called “third places.” The best ones for building community are open to everyone to come and go as they please; are inexpensive; are nearby; have regulars and newcomers; and are good places to talk casually with others. Check off ones that interest you.

Free and Often Open

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public library | <input type="checkbox"/> Public park | <input type="checkbox"/> Playgrounds (if you have a kid) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog park | <input type="checkbox"/> Community center | <input type="checkbox"/> Church, temple, mosque, etc. |

Costs May Be Involved

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookstore | <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee or tea shop | <input type="checkbox"/> Brewery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cafe or diner | <input type="checkbox"/> Bar, pub, or club | <input type="checkbox"/> Cat cafe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trivia night | <input type="checkbox"/> Barber shop or beauty salon | <input type="checkbox"/> Bowling alley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public pool | <input type="checkbox"/> Driving range | <input type="checkbox"/> Gym or exercise studio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skate park | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational sports league | <input type="checkbox"/> Batting cages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classes at a craft store | <input type="checkbox"/> Maker space | <input type="checkbox"/> Game night at a game store |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book club | <input type="checkbox"/> Recovery or support groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Farmer's market |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature reserve or state park | <input type="checkbox"/> Community gardens | <input type="checkbox"/> Community cleanup groups |

Others

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Where can you find people with similar interests or attitudes?

If any of the spaces you checked off above would help you connect with others who have similar interests (e.g., playing sports) or attitudes (e.g., caring about the environment), circle them. Below, brainstorm additional places, clubs, meetup groups, classes, or activities that could help you connect with people similar to you.

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How can you join a conversation?

Once you've found a "third place," hop into casual conversation. For people who are shy, struggle with reading social situations, or just out of practice meeting new people or new making friends, it can feel intimidating or awkward to do this. Here are a few pointers to consider.

Check first: Does the pair or group having the conversation seem open to someone joining them?

- ✓ People are standing in a fairly open circle and occasionally glance around the room
- ✓ There are pauses and lulls in the conversation
- ✓ People are talking about something general
- ✗ People are standing close together, touching, or are very focused on one another
- ✗ The conversation is fast and animated
- ✗ The topic of conversation is one only the group would understand

Pay attention: What are they talking about? Do you know enough about the topic to contribute? Do they appear to share your interests or attitudes?

- ✓ People are talking about a movie, sports game, or musical you just saw
- ✗ People are talking about a board game you've never heard of (and you prefer video games)

Wait for the right moment: Wait for a pause in the conversation. Show your interest in the topic of conversation, and ask a friendly-looking person if you can join in.

- ✓ "Hey, it sounds like you guys caught that crazy game last night. Mind if I join you?"
- ✗ Approach them but say nothing
- ✗ Just start talking with no permission to join

Provide relevant comments and questions: Show that you have a reason for joining this particular conversation. Stay on topic, share a little about what you think, and ask open-ended questions. Changing the subject, over-sharing personal information, or asking just yes or no questions might interrupt the flow of the conversation.

- ✓ "I was so sure we were going to win before halftime, but then things took a turn"
- ✓ "What did you think of the ref's call in the third quarter?"
- ✗ "My grandfather was a huge fan of the team; since he passed away, watching the game just isn't the same. When I was six years old..."
- ✗ "Have you guys been to this bar before?"

Assess feedback: How are people responding to you?

- ✓ Turning towards you, making eye contact
- ✓ Asking you questions and answering yours
- ✗ Turning away, looking away, looking annoyed
- ✗ Ignoring you, giving short or terse answers

Keep going! Try to balance between offering and asking for information. Be careful not to dominate the conversation or go totally silent.

Make a graceful exit, like: "I'll let you get back to your conversation, have a good one"

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How can you improve your conversation skills?

Aside from practice, here are some suggestions for keeping a conversation balanced and flowing.

Ask, listen, answer your own question: Ask someone a question and genuinely listen to their answer. If they don't ask you the same question back, acknowledge their answer and then add your own. This helps you balance between asking and telling in a conversation.

✓ "What did you think of her performance?" ... "Oh, I agree. I thought her singing was incredible."

Thinking about a topic you'd love to discuss with someone, brainstorm a question and your own answer:

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Add a little more detail: When someone asks you a question, respond with a little more detail than requested. This opens up more avenues for conversation.

✓ "The best musical I saw this year was X. → The writing was just so sharp and witty!"

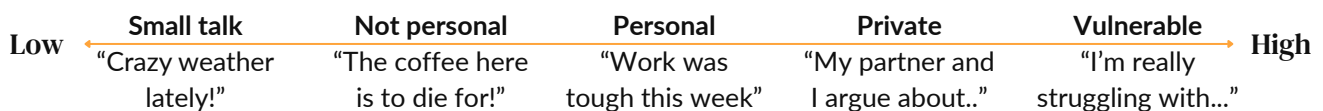
Imagine a question you'd love to answer. What additional info could you provide after your answer?

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Be mindful of self-disclosure: Self-disclosure is sharing personal information. When getting to know someone new, some people are comfortable with self-disclosure, and others find it awkward or overly intimate. A good rule of thumb is self-disclose about as much as the other person is - adjusted for *your* comfort level. Explore your comfort level with self-disclosure here:



Don't underestimate the power of (good) small talk: Lots of people dislike or don't see the point of chit-chatting about the weather, the weekend, or other neutral topics. But small talk can help build familiarity in a low-stakes way. Start with something that **connects** you (e.g., "The dog park is busy today!"), then expand the topic by **revealing** something related about yourself (e.g., "I've never had a puppy before. Fido is a handful!") and asking a **question** (e.g., "This is Sparky? What was the puppy phase like for him?").

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Repeat, repeat, repeat

Over time, keep showing up and making conversation. The foundation for friendship is often a combination of proximity, familiarity, and similarity. So:

1. show up regularly,
2. use repeated, casual conversation to become familiar to others, and
3. discover who in your community you have something in common with.

Show that you like someone (gracefully)

Friends are people we genuinely like to spend time with. If you're getting to know someone that you'd like to be friends with, there are many ways to show them that you enjoy their company.

- **Tell them** - "It's always great to talk to you" "We seem to have a lot in common"
 - However, using phrases like "I really like you" might be taken romantically, not platonically.
- **Listen to them** - "You mentioned X last week. How's that going?"
 - Focus these comments on things they told you directly. Mentioning things you learned from a deep dive on their social media might come off as unsettling rather than interested.
- **Compliment them** - "You have a great sense of humor" "I think it's so cool that you're doing X"
 - However, excessive compliments, or compliments that are insincere, can backfire because others may think you are praising them just to get something out of them.

Suggest a casual, new way to hang out

Once you know someone fairly well, see how things go in a different setting. To keep it casual, you might suggest:

- Spending time in a different **third place** that you're both interested in ("Want to check out that new coffee shop sometime next week?")
- Inviting them to a **group activity** you already plan to attend ("A few friends and I are meeting up for drinks this weekend, want to join us?")
- Focus on **activities** you both enjoy ("Want to play basketball sometime?")
- Keep it **public** to start - this may help others feel more comfortable (e.g., suggesting playing a board game together in a brewery or coffee shop rather than at home)

What are some casual places or activities you might suggest?

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Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



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