

## **How do you build relationships? An 11-step program**

Here are some tips for getting your relationships off the ground. Some of these ideas we learned in the first grade but, as adults, we sometimes forget.

1. *Build relationships one at a time.* Fortunately or unfortunately, there are no short cuts. Sending out a newsletter helps you keep in touch with lots of folks, but it's no substitute for getting to know a real person.
2. *Be friendly and make a connection.* This may seem self-evident, but a friendly word or smile can make someone's day. Try to find something in common: all of us want to have close connections with our fellow humans.
3. *Ask people questions.* People love to talk about themselves and about what they think. If you ask people about themselves and then take the time to listen attentively, they can become your fast friend.
4. *Tell people about yourself.* People won't trust you unless you are willing to trust them. Tell them what you genuinely care about and what you think.
5. *Go places and do things.* When asked why he robbed banks, the robber replied, "Because that's where the money is." If you want to make friends, you have to go where the people are: picnics, conferences, events, fundraisers, parties, playgrounds, bowling alleys, little league games, bake sales, etc..
6. *Accept people the way they are.* You don't have to agree with them all the time in order to form a relationship with them. No one likes to be judged.
7. *Assume other people want to form relationships, too.* Underneath the crabbiest looking person is often a lonely soul hoping someone will make a crack in their shell.
8. *Overcome your fear of rejection.* Most of us suffer from a fear of rejection, and there's only one thing to do about that: get over it. If you want to form relationships, plan on being rejected some of the time. You will be richly rewarded the rest of the time with the new relationships you have made.
9. *Be persistent.* People are often shy and suspicious. It takes a while to win trust. You can almost always form a relationship if you stick with it.
10. *Invite people to get involved.* People want to become part of something bigger than themselves. Many people are looking for an opportunity to meet other people who share common goals. At the worst, people will be flattered that you invited them to join.
11. *Enjoy people.* If you genuinely enjoy people, others will be attracted to your attitude. People will more likely want to be around you.

Special cases:

### **How do you build relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds than your own?**

Here are some common-sense guidelines:

*Learn about the person's culture.* Any effort will go a long way in showing that you care enough to find out about the reality of another person's life.

*Put yourself at the center of another person's culture.* Especially if you are getting to know someone who is not a part of majority culture, try going to their cultural events where *you* are the minority. If you are willing to take risks and put yourself in a situation in which you might feel uncomfortable, people will be more inclined to want to get to know you.

*3. Take a stand against the person's oppression.* Actions speak louder than words. People who experience oppression need allies to speak out against injustice. Strong relationships are forged when people act courageously on behalf of each other.

*4. Its okay to make mistakes.* You may have to make mistakes as you build relationships with people who have different cultural backgrounds than your own, but people are generally forgiving, especially if your intentions are good. Remember, hang in there even if you feel rejected.

#### **How do you build relationships with people who hold positions of political power?**

How do you form relationships with people who have titles? --Elected officials, business leaders, or heads of large organizations. Remember, they are probably not Martians, and once upon a time, they didn't have that title at all.

*Don't be intimidated.* People who hold titles or positions of political power are humans, too. They like to form relationships just like everyone else does.

*Listen and withhold judgment.* People with titles rarely get a chance to be listened to. They rarely get a chance to think through an issue without someone pressuring them to vote one way or another. One way to befriend such a person is to take the time to listen to them. See what you can offer them, not just in a political context but as a sympathetic human being.

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