

## 🌸 Supporting Healthy Friendships Across the Ages

### *Making and Maintaining Friendships Guide for Individuals / Ages 4–30+*

*Friendships are a critical pillar of well-being at every stage of life. The way we build and sustain them changes as we grow — but connection, trust, and mutual support remain at the heart of it all.*

### 1 Friendship Strategies by Age

Age Range	Key Actions	Questions to Reflect On / Ask Friends	Friendship Maintenance Tips
4–7 Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invite friends to play in short, fun activities</li> <li>- Practice sharing, taking turns, and being kind</li> <li>- Read or watch stories about friendship</li> <li>- Talk about feelings openly</li> </ul>	<p>“Who did I play with today?”</p> <p>“How might my friend be feeling right now?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep a list of friends you like to play with</li> <li>- Pick one day each week to get together</li> <li>- Give a small drawing or note to a friend</li> </ul>
8–11 Middle Childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Join a club, sport, or group project</li> <li>- Practice listening and compromise</li> <li>- Invite friends to do activities outside school</li> <li>- Try joining games or starting conversations</li> </ul>	<p>“What was something fun I talked about with a friend today?”</p> <p>“Who would I like to see soon?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Check in with friends weekly</li> <li>- Remember birthdays or special days</li> <li>- Plan fun one-on-one time</li> </ul>
12–14 Tweens & Early Teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make plans with friends and keep safety in mind</li> <li>- Think about what makes a friendship healthy</li> <li>- Balance online and in-person time</li> <li>- Learn how to handle peer pressure calmly</li> </ul>	<p>“What do I value most in a friend?”</p> <p>“How can I handle disagreements well?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set reminders to reach out</li> <li>- Send quick “thinking of you” messages</li> <li>- Plan hangouts ahead of time</li> </ul>
14–18 Teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take the lead in making social plans</li> <li>- Notice which friendships feel supportive vs. draining</li> <li>- Learn to navigate group</li> </ul>	<p>“Who really ‘gets’ me when life feels hard?”</p> <p>“What helps me handle friendship stress?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schedule study sessions or hangouts</li> <li>- Stay connected via group chats</li> <li>- Celebrate each other’s wins</li> </ul>

	<p>dynamics and online social spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stand up for yourself when needed</li> </ul>		
19–23 Young Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adjust to friendship changes from moving or finishing school</li> <li>- Mix old and new social circles</li> <li>- Keep boundaries and balance relationships with other responsibilities</li> </ul>	<p>“Who lifts me up when I’m feeling low?”</p> <p>“How do I keep in touch with long-time friends?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan occasional meetups (even virtually)</li> <li>- Send “thinking of you” notes</li> <li>- Celebrate milestones together</li> </ul>
24–29 Early Adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be intentional about long-distance friendships</li> <li>- Connect through major life changes (career, housing, relationships)</li> <li>- Seek friendships in work, community, and hobbies</li> </ul>	<p>“How do I make space for friendship in my busy life?”</p> <p>“What new connections have surprised me?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set recurring catch-ups (coffee, calls, walks)</li> <li>- Share hobbies or activities</li> <li>- Ask for and offer support</li> </ul>
30+ Adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accept that friendship dynamics shift with life stages</li> <li>- Deepen long-term friendships</li> <li>- Focus on quality relationships over quantity</li> <li>- Recognize that effort matters</li> </ul>	<p>“Which friendships have stood the test of time, and why?”</p> <p>“What helps us stay close when life is busy?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create traditions or rituals</li> <li>- Offer help during life changes</li> <li>- Schedule friend time as a priority</li> </ul>

## 2 Conversation & Connection Starters

Use these to deepen bonds or reconnect:

- “Who has been making a difference in your life lately?”
- “What’s something you appreciate about our friendship?”
- “How do you handle disagreements or distance in friendships?”
- “Is there a friendship you’d like to reconnect with?”
- “What helps you feel close even from far away?”

## 3 Friendship Habits & Routines





- Visual reminders — keep photos, mementos, or lists of friend names and birthdays.
- Regular check-ins — build in weekly or monthly calls, texts, or meetups.
- Celebrate milestones — acknowledge moves, promotions, or rough patches overcome.
- Stay open to new friends — every stage of life offers opportunities through work, hobbies, or community events.


## **4** Keys to Strong Friendships at Any Age

 **Ask, listen, and respond with care.**

 **Make time — connection doesn't happen by accident.**

 **Be the kind of friend you want to have — reliable, respectful, and supportive.**

 **Accept that friendships change — some deepen, some drift, and that's natural.**

 **Value effort over perfection — reaching out is what counts.**

