

## MAKING FRIENDS

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### STUDENT COUNSELLING

### WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you would like to make an appointment to see a counsellor to learn more about this topic, please contact the counselling service on your campus.

Distance students can contact any one of the campuses. Please tell the receptionist if you need an urgent appointment.

### CONTACT DETAILS

#### ALBANY

Health and Counselling

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (09) 443 9783

Email: [Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz)

#### MANAWATŪ

Student Counselling Service

Turitea Campus, Palmerston North

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (06) 350 5533

Email: [s.counselling@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.counselling@massey.ac.nz)

#### WELLINGTON

Student Counselling Service

Hours 8.30am - 4.30pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (04) 801 2542

<http://crow.massey.ac.nz>

<http://health-counselling.massey.nz>



## MAKING FRIENDS

Going to university, especially if it is in a new city, brings many opportunities to learn and try new things, to see new places and make new friends from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. This can be an exciting time of personal growth. However, making new friends can be scary, especially if none of your old school friends are with you. It can also be a lonely time, before your social network is established.

### FRIENDS, FRIENDS, FRIENDS...

Loneliness means having no one to confide in, no one who will listen when you're low during the rough times. Without friends it is easier to feel bad about yourself and to feel as if your problems are insurmountable.

Added to that is the fear that 'there is something wrong with me if I don't have friends'. Friends provide status, support, fun, ideas and much more; no wonder people want friends! They are often our first source of practical help, advice, and information.

Having more than one friend shares the load so that you don't feel you are bothering someone with all your problems. Also they may not be available when you need them most.

### HOW WE MAKE THINGS WORSE

It is easy to assume everyone else has friends, especially if you see them surrounded by people at social gatherings.

Starting new friendships involves taking a risk, risking rejection. Just because someone is not interested in being more than an acquaintance is not necessarily a judgement about you

They may already have some friends and not feel the need or have the time to develop new friendships. We also get along with people similar to ourselves and you may not be their type, or they yours. It's easy to fall prey to negative self talk such as, 'there's something wrong with me' or, 'I'm the only one who feels like this'.

It may feel a little awkward at first to make the step from greeting someone in the lecture room to inviting them for coffee or to meet for lunch. But if you take the risk you may be rewarded with friendship. Turning a chance encounter into a friendship takes time and cannot be rushed.

Take courage in the friends you had before - if you've done it before you can do it again. Be patient and don't jump to critical conclusions about yourself.



### MAKING NEW FRIENDS—FIRST STEPS

This requires a few key social skills that can be learned—assertiveness may be helpful.

- Remind yourself that anyone in a new environment goes through an adjustment phase and in time you will make friends.
- Resist the urge to withdraw from people, don't isolate yourself.
- Practice your social skills by always making an effort to sit next to someone in lectures and say hello to them, join in class discussions.
- See your early attempts to talk to someone as 'practice sessions'. This will make their response less of an issue. You'll be less anxious and more your natural self.
- It may sound a bit soppy but it works: - make a commitment to be a friend to yourself first and foremost and see this as something you are doing to meet your needs and take care of yourself. Relax alone and become comfortable with yourself. Find your balance between solitude and socialising. This will help you be your natural self rather than coming across as needy or desperate.
- Get involved in sport, art, religion or clubs on campus—these are great places to meet people. The sport or activity provides a natural icebreaker.

### DEEPER FRIENDSHIP—NEXT STEPS

Understanding yourself a little can help. For example if you are naturally an introvert or a shy person you may do things very differently to an extrovert. They always seem to be surrounded by others who are laughing and joking. You may find it easier to get to know people slowly one to one. If you think about it you may actually prefer to have a few quiet serious friends rather than a lot of talkative ones.

Introverted people can find it isolating if they do not fit into the drinking and loud partying culture which can be dominated by extroverts. Finding other people to have meaningful conversation with can be a struggle.

Try listening first and talking later. Most people are happy to talk about films they have seen, books they have read, what the government is doing to student loans, sport or even the weather. These topics provide important bridges to more important interesting stuff.

Talk about your feelings and experiences a little too, so that others start to get a sense of who you are. Be positive, enthusiastic, thoughtful and encouraging in your support and acceptance of them. Ask open questions such as, "what was happening there?" rather than questions requiring only a yes or no answer. Remember that building friendships take time.

Try and make friends of both genders and be clear about the nature of your friendships while recognising the boundaries that distinguish a friendship from an intimate relationship. You do not have to be in an intimate or romantic relationship to meet your needs for friendship and belonging.

Friends are great in themselves and they form a vital part of your personal support network. They can throw you a life line when you feel like you are drowning in a crisis. Taking time to make friends is part of taking care of yourself and it gives you the opportunity to be a support to others when they are in need (and that can feel pretty good too). Be aware of your good points—find them so that you can encourage others to do the same.

**Friendship, its up to you to take the first step, take a deep breath and go for it!**

