



Making and Keeping Friends: Facilitator Guide



Table of Contents:

1. Session One: Overview and Introduction (pg. 3-4)
2. Session Two: Qualities of Good Friends (pg. 5)
3. Session Three: Making Friends (pg. 6-7)
4. Session Four: More About Making Friends (pg. 8-9)
5. Session Five: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong (pg. 10)
6. Session Six: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong (pg. 11-12)
7. Session Seven: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong (pg. 13-14)
8. Session Eight: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong (pg. 15-16)
9. Session Nine: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong (pg. 17-18)
10. Session Ten: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong (pg. 19)
11. Session Eleven: Establishing and Honoring Boundaries (pg. 20)
12. Session Twelve: Resolving Problems in Relationships (pg. 21)
13. Session Thirteen: Building Skills That Enhance Friendships (pg. 22-23)
14. Session Fourteen: Building Skills That Enhance Friendships (pg. 24-25)
15. Session Fifteen: Time to Get Started! (pg. 26)
16. Resources (pg. 27)
17. References (pg. 28)

Session One: Overview and Introduction

Goal for the lesson: This lesson's goal is to establish group rules, introduce the group and relate the group to the participants' individual PROS goals.

Start the group by introducing yourself and the group. Make sure that everyone in the room is scheduled to be in the group and take group attendance. Once introductions are made and a brief description of the group has been provided to the participants, let participants know the structure of the group. Each session will contain discussion and activity. Start with the introduction below and then move into the first activity, establishing group rules.

Introduction: Meeting new people can be nerve-wrecking, and a mental health condition can make you more insecure and less confident. Being in groups of people may be stressful, and symptoms of some mental health conditions can have physical symptoms that are sometimes difficult to control, or you simply may not feel like going out and being around others. While it may be difficult, putting yourself in situations to meet others can provide you with not only a group of people to hang out with but also a good support network if you need it (NAMI).

Many individuals with disabilities interact primarily with their family, the people who take care of or provide services to them, and others in the programs in which they participate. These relationships can clearly be significant and should be encouraged. However, outside of family members, people may have no freely given and chosen relationships. Generally, many people with disabilities face certain disadvantages in meeting and getting to know others.

<http://www.recreationtherapy.com/articles/lutfiyya.htm>

This group will help people to identify why forming relationships are important to them. At the completion of this group, participants will be able to identify the qualities they would like in their friends, identify places to go to make friends, learn strategies for keeping strong friendships, establish boundaries in friendships, and resolve problems in relationships.

Activity: (Supplies needed: Whiteboard and markers)

Establish group rules. Ask group participants what rules they want to establish for the group. You may want to consider rules around attendance, lateness, language/profanity, and not talking while another person is talking.

Use the discussion question to get the participant's perspective on why they can benefit from the group and why they enrolled. You can either take notes on individual index cards for each group participant or you can ask participants to write it down themselves. Remember to bring the index cards with you to each group session as a reminder for the group about what their goals and barriers are.

Discussion Question: Why did you decide to enroll in this group? What would you like to get out of attending this group?

Activity: (Supplies needed: white board and markers, index cards, pens)

Ask each group participant what their goals are for attending this group. Write down each person's goals on an index card and bring it to group every week. Spend a few minutes reviewing the goals in each group session to remind participants why they want to attend until they can articulate it themselves.



Session Two: Qualities of Good Friends

Goal for the lesson: Participants will learn about qualities that make a good friend and identify the qualities in friends that are most important to them.

People seem to have a natural need for friends and with good reason. Friends increase your enjoyment of life and relieve feelings of loneliness. They even can help reduce stress and improve your health. Having good friends is especially helpful when you are going through any kind of hard time: experiencing anxiety or panic attacks, depression, phobias or delusional thinking; living with a serious illness or disability; having a major loss in your life; or just being under a lot of stress. At times like these, good friends and supporters can make all the difference.

When you are with good friends you feel good about yourself, and you are glad to be with them. A friend is someone who:

- You like, respect, and trust, and who likes, respects and trusts you
- Doesn't always understand you, but accepts and likes you as you are, even as you grow and change
- Allows you the space to change, grow, make decisions, and even make mistakes
- Listens to you and share with you, both the good times and the bad times
- Respects your need for confidentiality so you can tell them anything
- Lets you freely express your feelings and emotions without judging, teasing, or criticizing
- Gives you good advice when you want and ask for it, assists you in taking action that will help you feel better, and works with you in difficult situations to figure out what to do next
- Accepts your self-defined limitations and helps you to remove them
- Lets you help when they need it
- You want to be with, but you aren't obsessed about being with
- Doesn't ever take advantage of you

A good friend or supporter may or may not be your age or the same sex as you; come from the same educational, cultural or religious background; or share interests that are similar to yours. Friendships also have different depths, some are closer to the heart, some more superficial-but they're all useful and good.

Ask participants to brainstorm all the qualities they would like to have in a friend. Use the whiteboard and markers to keep a running list. After the list has been created ask participants to write down their own lists and discuss why each of the qualities is important to them with the rest of the group.

Activity: (Supplies needed: Whiteboard and markers, paper and pens)

Brainstorm a list of qualities you would like your friends, or some of your friends, to have. Now, using this long list, identify and write down the list of qualities you would like in your own friends. Discuss why each of these qualities is important to you with the group.

Session Three: Making Friends

Goal for the lesson: Participants will learn strategies for making friends. They will identify one new strategy and commit to trying it.

Making new friends can be exciting or intimidating, depending on your personality and your circumstances, but ultimately it is rewarding. To meet new people who might become your friends, you have to go to places where others are gathered. The hardest thing about going out in the community is doing it for the first time. It's hard for everyone. Push through those hard feelings and go. Most of the time, you will be glad you did.

Don't limit yourself to one idea or strategy for meeting people. The broader your effort, the greater your likelihood of success. Try several of these ideas:

- Attend a support group. Support groups are a great way to make new friends. It could be a group for people who have similar health issues or life challenges, or a group for people of the same age or sex.
- Go to community activities like sporting events, theatrical productions, concerts, art shows, poetry readings, book signings, civic groups, special interest groups and political meetings. Take a course or join a church. Let yourself be seen and known in the community. If money is a problem, consider going to your local library and looking in the newspaper for listings of free events. Spend dime in paces that are free, like a local bookstore with couches where you can sit and read for a while. You will have a feeling of connection even without any dialogue with others.
- Volunteer. Strong connections often are formed when people work together on projects of mutual concern. When volunteering, you are already with a group of people with a common interest. You could help out at a soup kitchen, read to children in day care, visit people in nursing homes, deliver flowers in the hospital or serve on a political or social action committee. You could bring snacks for the other volunteers and arrange a time to get together and eat with them for more social contact.

Ask group participants to brainstorm places they can go to try to make new friends. Encourage discussion of using free events from newspapers and community calendars. Create a list using a whiteboard and markers. When the list is complete, ask group members to identify places that appeal to them and to commit to going to one of the places to try to meet someone new.

Activity: (Supplies needed: Whiteboard and markers, newspapers)

Make a list. Think about places where you have made friends in the past. Check your newspaper for community events and support groups. Which ones sound appealing to you? Make a commitment to go to at least one of these events or groups.

Note: Some people use chat groups and other connections on the internet as a way to make friends and to relieve loneliness. While this can be a good short-term way to connect with others, avoid sharing personal information and your phone and address with people you do not know well or whom you have not met in person.



Session Four: More About Making Friends

Goal for the lesson: Participants will identify additional ways that they can meet people in the hopes of making new friends. The concept of boundaries in friendships is introduced in this lesson.

Reaching out to establish a friendship sometimes happens simply and casually. At other times, it takes special effort. If you feel you need and want to take some action so a person you have met becomes a friend, you could:

- Ask the person to join you at a café for coffee or lunch, to go for a walk, or to engage in some other activity with you
- Call the person on the phone to share a piece of good news you think they might be interested in
- Send a short, friendly e-mail or text and see if they respond
- Chat with them about something of interest to both of you
- Offer to help the person with a particular task if you think it would be appreciated

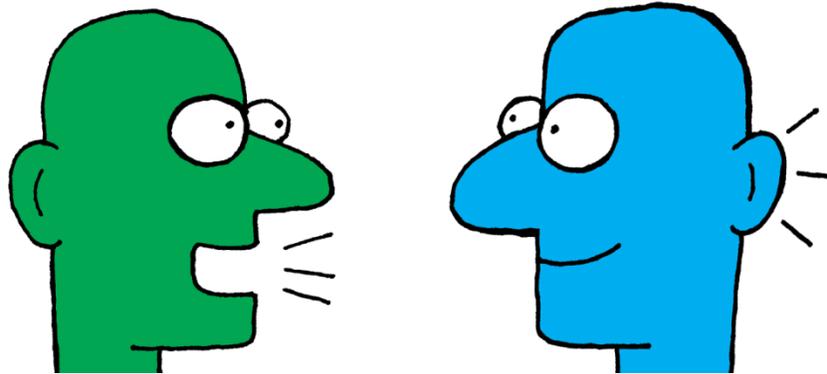
Even window shopping with another person can be good, especially if there is a theme, even humorous, like “I’m going to find something in the window I could wear to a Halloween party.” A woman went shopping with a friend. They tried on lots of clothes that they’d buy if they had the money, and it was great fun. Test the waters by proceeding slowly. As you both enjoy each other more, the friendship deepens. Notice how you feel about yourself when you are with the other person. If you feel good about yourself, you may be on the road to a fulfilling friendship.

If you have never had a close friend, you may have a hard time knowing when to take action that will allow the friendship to deepen. A friendship may be starting to get closer if you are feeling more comfortable with that person, you feel content and at ease when the two of you are together, and you feel disappointed when you and the other person can’t get together, but you don’t “fall apart.” You can be aware of how the other person is feeling when they are with you by listening closely to what they are saying, by noticing their body language and responses, and by asking them.

Don’t overwhelm the person with phone calls or other kinds of contact. Use your intuition and common sense to determine when to call and how often. Don’t ever call late at night or early in the morning until you both have agreed to be available to each other in emergencies (for example, one of you is sick or has gotten some very bad news).

The concept of boundaries is briefly introduced in this discussion question. Introduce the discussion question and guide it around the concepts of boundaries and "space". Have the group think about why it's important to allow friendships to grow naturally and not be rushed.

Discussion Question: Think of a time when someone called you too often or disturbed you when you were sleeping. How did it make you feel? Why would you be put off by someone calling or texting you "too much"?



Session Five: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong

(Note: It will take several weeks to complete this lesson)

Goal for the lesson: Participants will spend the next several session learning about ways to keep friendships strong. They will learn how self-esteem, having varied interests, and related to strong friendships

Like yourself. If you don't like yourself, don't feel that you have any value, or don't think others will like you, you will have a hard time reaching out to people who may become friends. Work on building your self-esteem by treating yourself well—eating healthy foods, getting plenty of exercise and rest, doing things that you enjoy—and by reminding yourself over and over that you are a very special and worthwhile person.

Here are some things you can do to enrich your life and make new friends. Try them all and see which ones make the most sense for you. There are activities to try for each suggestion. You can do these together in the group until you feel more comfortable doing them on your own.

Ask participants why they think it's important to have a positive sense of self or good self-esteem. How is having good self-esteem related to making and keeping friends? Let the group know that they deserve to have good friends. Ask them to make a list of five things that they do well. Use paper, pens or markers and other craft supplies to have each participant make this list. Ask participants to share their list with the group. If someone in the group can't identify five things they do well ask the group to help them.

Activities: (Supplies needed: books on self-esteem, paper, pens, craft supplies to make signs)

Go to the library and get a book to read on building self-esteem. Make a list of at least five things that you do well. Make a sign that says "I am a wonderful person." Hang it in a place where you will see it often—like your refrigerator door or on the mirror in your bathroom.

Have a variety of interests. Develop interests in different things—it will open opportunities for connection with others and make you a more interesting person that others enjoy being with. Some interests include music, art, crafts, gardening, watching or participating in sports activities or fixing cars.

Now ask participants to make a list of interests. Remind them that this list of interests will come in handy when they are unsure of things they can do for fun. Give each participant pen and paper and ask them to spend a few minutes making their list. Be sure to ask participants to share their list of interests with the rest of the group.

Activity: (Supplies needed: paper and pens)

Make a list of your interests. Hang it on your refrigerator or in another convenient place. It will act as a reminder when you are having a hard time thinking of things to do.

Session Six: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn more strategies for keeping friendships strong, including learning why being able to spend some time alone is important, why having a variety of friends is important and taking action to make new friends.

Enjoy spending time alone. If you don't enjoy spending time alone, you may feel desperate to have people around you all the time. This desperation can drive others away from you. You can learn to enjoy spending time alone by:

- Developing interests and hobbies that you can do by yourself
- Anticipating times you will be spending alone and arranging to do some special things for yourself during those times
- Changing your attitude about time alone so you enjoy spending a reasonable amount of time alone
- Addressing any fears you may have about being alone and doing everything you can to ensure you will be safe, such as locking doors and windows

Have a discussion with the group about being alone. Some people with psychiatric disabilities can have a difficult time being alone because of symptoms. Ask the group how they feel when they are alone. Do they have a hard time dealing with symptoms? If so, what can they do to cope with symptoms so that being alone is more tolerable? How can the participant find a way to be alone but still be active? Ask participants what they activity they can do by themselves that is enjoyable. Are participants willing to try spending some "alone time" trying something enjoyable?

Activity: If you are uncomfortable when you are alone, set aside an hour of time when you can be alone. Make a plan of something enjoyable you can do during that time that focuses on you, like painting a picture, playing a musical instrument, journaling, or taking a walk (not watching television, working or using the computer). Try to do this at least once a week. As you become comfortable with time alone, set aside longer periods of time alone for yourself.

Have plenty of friends. Work on having several friends so that someone is always available when you would like companionship or support. Expect to have many friends because you are worth it! Relying on only one or two people puts too much pressure on everyone. Some people like to have more friends than others, so the number is really up to your own sense of what you need, but a good goal for most people is to have five close friends.

It's important for people to have access to their friends. Knowing how to contact important people in one's life is paramount to keeping friendships strong. Have each participant be sure that they know how to contact the people most important to them. They may need to make a list of friends, or important people, and their contact information and keep it in a place that is easily accessible.

Activity: (Supplies needed: paper and pens)

Make a list of your friends with their phone numbers to keep at a convenient place for easy reference. If you don't feel that you have any friends right now, list your health care professionals and family members. Add friends to your list as you make them.



Session Seven: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn more strategies for keeping friendships strong, including how they can take action to make new friends and communicate openly to foster friendships.

Take action to make new friends. To make new friends, you have to take action. You can do it as slowly or as quickly as you want, taking small steps or big steps. You can also work on improving your relationships with people already in your life by doing things like inviting them to your home to chat, share a meal, play a game, watch a video, or share some other activity or by doing a favor for them when they are having a hard time.

Have participants brainstorm a list of things they can do that will put them in contact with others. Ask them to; in particular, think of things that are free or low cost. Write the list down on a whiteboard so that everyone in the group has a visual reminder of these actions. Ask participants to pick two things that they feel most comfortable trying.

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Do something that puts you in contact with others. Go to an event in your community. Join a group. Brainstorm a list of things you can do that will put you in contact with others that is free or low-cost.

Communicate openly. To communicate openly with another person, you need to have a feeling of trust with him or her. This develops gradually over time as you come to know the person better and your friendship becomes closer. Tell your friends what you need and want and ask them what they want and need from you. Tell them all important pieces of information, but do not share so much information about minute details that the other person gets bored. Watch the response you are getting from the person or people you are talking to so you can know if this is the right time to be sharing this information or the right subject for the person. You may need to change what you are saying and when you are saying it according to the response you observe. Avoid sharing details of traumatic events that might upset the other person.

Depending on what you are talking about, you may want to talk in a place that is private and where you won't be interrupted, that is congenial and physically comfortable, and that is quiet with few distractions.

Have participants start to practice communication skills. Ask the group to think about something special that's going on. It could be anything from attending a new church, plans for the holidays, getting a new roommate...anything that they consider special. Break participants up into pairs and have each person practice sharing that something special with their partner for about five minutes. After each person has had the opportunity to practice, bring the group back together and discuss how it went. Would any of the participants have done something differently now that they have heard from the others? How did it feel to share something special with someone?

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Think about something special that is going on in your life. Tell a friend or someone you know and like about it. Ask them to tell you about something special that is going on in their life. Practice doing this in the group with a partner. Discuss how it went with the rest of the group.

Session Eight: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn more strategies for keeping friendships strong. They will learn how to listen and share equally and how to take equal responsibility for the friendship.

Listen and share equally. Listen closely to what the other person is saying. Let the other person know you are paying close attention through eye contact, body language and occasional brief comments like, “I knew you could do it,” “That sounds like fun,” or “I bet you wish it had happened some other way.” Avoid thinking about what your response is going to be while the person is talking. If a person is sharing something intense and personal, give them your full attention. Don’t share an “I can top that” story.

Avoid giving others advice unless they ask for it. Just listening is fine! In some cases, you can summarize what you hear them saying or ask clarifying questions, but it is never necessary to “fix the problem” for them. People often need to share the details of hard times or difficult experiences over and over again, until they have “gotten it out of their system” or figured out a way to take some action or solve the problem. You can be a really good friend by listening to the same story again and again, reassuring that it is OK to do this. Never make fun of what the other person thinks or feels. Avoid judging or criticizing the other person.

Sometimes it may be important to be realistic about how much time you can spend listening and let the other person know how much time you have. Be sure that you also have about equal time to share whatever it is you would like to share. Don’t be embarrassed by emotions that come up for you or the other person while you are sharing.

Split participants up into pairs. Tell the group that they will spend about five minutes practicing listening to their partner, who will be telling them about a hard time they may be having. Make sure you stress the importance of paying attention and sharing a kind word afterwards. After the exercise is over, ask the group to share their experience of listening. How difficult was it to give someone attention and listen? How was the experience of sharing a kind word and letting the other person know that you care?

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Pair up with a partner in your group. Take about five minutes to practice listening closely to someone who is telling you about a hard time they are having. Give them your full attention. Let them know you care by saying things like “I am sorry you are having such a hard time.”

Encourage participants to practice listening outside of the group. Ask them to arrange time to spend with a friend or someone they know practice sharing time equally and talking about something that is going on in their life.

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Now try this on your own outside of group. Arrange to spend half an hour with a friend or someone you know, even a family member. Agree to share the time equally—one of you talks for the first fifteen minutes while the other listens—and then you change roles. If you find it hard to talk for 15

minutes you can share the time another way. Maybe talk in 5 minute intervals. Just make sure to share the time evenly.

Take equal responsibility for the friendship. Both people in a friendship need to take responsibility for the friendship. For instance, you should be making plans for shared activities some of the time and your friend should be making these plans some of the time. If you are taking all of the responsibility for the friendship, talk to your friend about it and figure out a way to make the friendship more equal.

Discuss the importance of equal responsibility in a friendship. Why is this important and how can participants practice this idea? Ask participants to identify someone who they have recently spent time with. How can they contact that person and return the favor?

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Identify someone who has recently invited you to an activity or done something special for you. How can you contact them and return the favor? If you can't think of anyone who has invited you anywhere or has done something special for you, do something nice for someone who is nice to you—like complimenting a store clerk who is bagging your groceries or thanking your mail delivery person for being so prompt.

Session Nine: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn more strategies for keeping friendships strong. They will learn why it is important to keep personal information confidential and to have fun with friends.

Keep personal information confidential! As you feel more and more comfortable with the other person, you will find that you talk more and share more personal information. Have a mutual understanding that anything personal the two of you discuss is absolutely confidential and that you will not share personal information about each other with other people.

Discuss why it is so important to keep personal information confidential. Ask the group what kind of personal information should be kept private. Ask participants to make a reminder not to share personal information with others and keep it in a place where it will serve as a reminder.

Activity: (Supplies needed: markers and paper)

Write, “I will never share any personal information that another person shares with me.” Read it over and put this note in a place like your refrigerator door to remind yourself.

Have a good time. Spend most of your time with your friends doing fun, interesting activities together. Sometimes friendships get “bogged down” if all you ever do is talk about each other’s struggles. Go to a movie, walk on the beach, play ball, watch a fun video, work on an art project, cook a meal-whatever would be fun for both of you. Take turns suggesting and initiating these activities.

Ask participants to discuss the importance of having fun. How does having fun with people help to alleviate mental health symptoms? Have the group talk about what they would like to do with a friend to have fun.

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Call a friend, or someone you know who you hope will become a friend, and ask them to share a fun activity with you—like going to a movie, watching a video, or making dinner together. Who will you call and what can you ask them to do?

Stay in touch. Maintain regular contact with your friends and supporters, even when things are going well. Give them a call; send them a note or an email. Always have a plan for your next meeting—whether it is tomorrow or next month. If you have to change it, do so, but always have a plan. If you can’t end a visit by making a plan, make a plan to make a plan, such as “I’ll call you Saturday to find a time when we can get together.” If something you want to share comes up in the meantime, you can arrange a get-together by phone or in person, but always have something planned.

You will find that regular, scheduled contact is the best way to assure that your friendship will remain strong. It means making a commitment to the friendship. Many people find it is helpful to plan ahead for times when they know they may feel lonely, lie on the weekend, in the evening, or on holidays. Plan get-

together for these hard times at least several days in advance and, especially around the holidays, even further ahead. It often is difficult to make last minute plans for time together with friends.

Ask the group if they find it difficult to reach out to someone to arrange getting together. Ask them to practice calling someone to arrange a get together. Who will they call and what will they ask the other person to do? Break the group up into pairs to practice making the call. Debrief with the group after everyone has had a chance to practice. How comfortable were they with this exercise? What can make the experience easier?

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Call a friend or someone you hope will become a friend and arrange to get together at a time when you now it might be hard for you to be alone. Practice making this call with a partner in the group. How did it go? Give each other feedback in the group. Use this feedback to become more confident in your skills to reach out to someone and ask them to get together.



Session Ten: Guidelines for Keeping Friendships Strong

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn more strategies for keeping friendships strong, in particular how to arrange to visit someone in their home, and how to cope with losing a friend.

Home visits. Good friends often spend time in each other's homes. By making these times together special you can enrich your friendships. You can make your friends feel welcome and comfortable in your home by focusing your full attention on your friends when they are in your home, having a clear, comfortable area for visiting, turning off the television and radio when you are talking or involved in an activity together, and asking other family members to be friendly and welcoming but not too intrusive. Confine pets that may overwhelm or frighten your friends.

Ask the group what their level of comfort is with inviting someone into their home or visiting someone in their home. People sometimes live in situations where they have roommates and may not feel comfortable inviting someone into their home. What would make the participant comfortable enough to invite someone into their home? Is there anything they may want to change about their living environment that would make them more comfortable? Does travel make any of the participants uncomfortable? How can they cope with that so that they can successfully arrange to visit someone in their home? What other options are there?

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Time to practice again! Pair up with someone in the group and practice calling and inviting a friend or someone you hope will become a friend over for a visit to your home. How did it go? What would make you feel comfortable to do this outside of the group?

Losing a friend. People come in and out of each other's lives through the course of their life. Everyone loses a friend from time to time because of things like moving, changes in life focus, relationship difficulties, or even death. This is difficult for everyone. Spend some time "being with" the sadness that you feel—as much time as you feel you need. Take time to cry, if that feels right for you. Then, spend time with other friends and do things that you enjoy. The sadness from losing a friend may never go away. You will adjust to it and your life will feel good again.

Spend some time normalizing the idea of losing a friend. You may want to disclose a time in your own life where you drifted apart from a friend or a close friend moved away and the friendship dissolved. Ask the group participants to share an experience they had with losing a friend and to talk about how they dealt with the loss. Some people may cope with loss by using alcohol or other substances. Or loss can be a trigger to relapse if someone is in recovery from using substances. Be sure to encourage participants to use their supports if they need to. Supports can come in various forms from talking to a friend, family member or practitioner, using 12-step supports, or spiritual supports.

Activity: (Supplies needed: none)

Share your experience with losing a friend with the group. Talk about what happened and how you felt afterwards.

Session Eleven: Establishing and Honoring Boundaries

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn why boundaries are an important part of friendships. They will learn what people commonly set limits around and will identify what kind of limits are important to them in their own friendships.

Feelings inside of you (intuition) let you know who you do and don't want to be close to. Sometimes you may want to be close to a person but are confused by questions of boundaries. You may ask yourself questions like "Have I called too much this week?" "Have I stayed too long; should I leave now?" "Should I offer to help her with the children or would she be uncomfortable with that?" It's appropriate to ask yourself such questions. Boundaries may differ from person to person. You may feel comfortable with some people calling you whenever they feel like it, but you may want to put some restriction around calls from other people. You may not want to go to certain kinds of activities with some friends but be happy to go to the same activity with others.

People commonly set limits or boundaries around things like:

- The amount of time spent together and place to get together
- The kind and frequency of shared activities
- Phone call time limits-time of day, frequency, and length
- Connection with family
- Amount of physical touch
- Topics of conversation

In all relationships, you have the right to define your own limits and boundaries so you feel comfortable and safe. Say "no" to anything you don't want. You have the right to ask for what you need, want, and deserve. Expect and insist that others respect your boundaries and, as a good friend, always respect their boundaries.

Ask the group why they think it may be important to have boundaries in friendships or relationships. Have the group brainstorm a list of boundaries and keep track by writing them on a whiteboard. Ask each participant to pick the two boundaries that are most important to them in their friendships and explain why with the rest of the group.

Activity: (Supplies needed: whiteboard and markers)

Brainstorm a list of boundaries that you have or think you would want to have in friendships. Now share your top two with the group and explain why these are most important to you.



Session Twelve: Resolving Problems in Relationships

Goals for the lesson: Participants will feel more comfortable with how to resolve problems in relationships. They will learn to be assertive and practice ways of resolving problems.

Because each situation is different you will have to use your resourcefulness, along with good communication skills and other strategies, to decide what to do and what action to take each time a difficult situation comes up or you become aware of a difference that is keeping your friendship from being a good one. Some things you can do include:

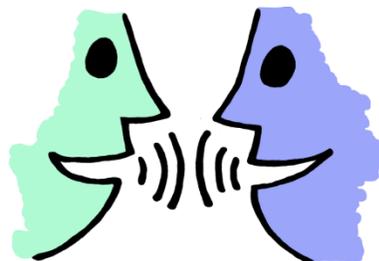
- Talk with the other person using “I” statements that describe how you feel in a situation rather than making an assumption about how the other person feels
- Work with your friend to develop a plan to resolve the situation, including the steps each of you will take and when you will take them (check in with each other often about your progress)
- Do a reality check with yourself, asking yourself what is really happening, and deciding on solutions that will work for you
- Be clear with yourself and with your friends about your boundaries, saying “no” when necessary

This activity has two parts. The first part asks the participants to brainstorm ideas they may have that help to resolve problems in a relationship. These can be new ideas or things they have tried in the past. Keep track of answers by using a whiteboard. Once the brainstorming is over, ask participants to take part in a role play. Ask who in the group feels comfortable role playing, first with the facilitator and then perhaps two participants will volunteer to role play. Ask the group for feedback and then role play again, but this time adding in the groups’ feedback. Remember to use “I” statements.

Activity: (Supplies needed: whiteboard and markers)

Brainstorm with the group. List any other ideas you might have to solve problems in a relationship. What has worked in the past when you have tried to resolve problems with your friends?

Role Play: You and your friend Linda have known each other for about 5 years. You know that Linda often has a hard time budgeting her money and asks you to borrow a few dollars every now and again. You usually lend it to her and she pays you back. Linda has recently asked to borrow \$100. You feel bad saying no to her but you really can’t afford to loan her the money. You are upset that she is even asking you for such a large sum of money. You need to tell Linda that you are not going to lend her the money and that it makes you uncomfortable when she does ask you to loan her any amount of money. You are going to ask her to stop asking you for loans.



Session Thirteen: Building Skills That Enhance Friendships

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn qualities that strengthen friendships. They will be able to identify the unique strengths that they offer to friends. Participants will also identify what they would like to work on to help them make and keep friends.

Everyone has good qualities that they bring to friendships-qualities that make friendships richer and stronger. The following is a list of some of these qualities:

- Being independent and self-sufficient
- Being positive, upbeat and warm
- Talking about others in a positive way
- Being honest and dependable
- Doing your share of both the talking and listening
- Being respectful of the other person’s feelings
- Keeping yourself clean and well-groomed
- Accepting your individual differences
- Listening closely without interrupting
- Being nonjudgmental
- Giving the other person plenty of “space”

Ask participants to take 5 minutes and write down as many strengths that they as they can that they bring to a friendship. Ask participants to share three of their strengths with the rest of the group. You may choose to write down participants’ answers on a whiteboard for the group to see.

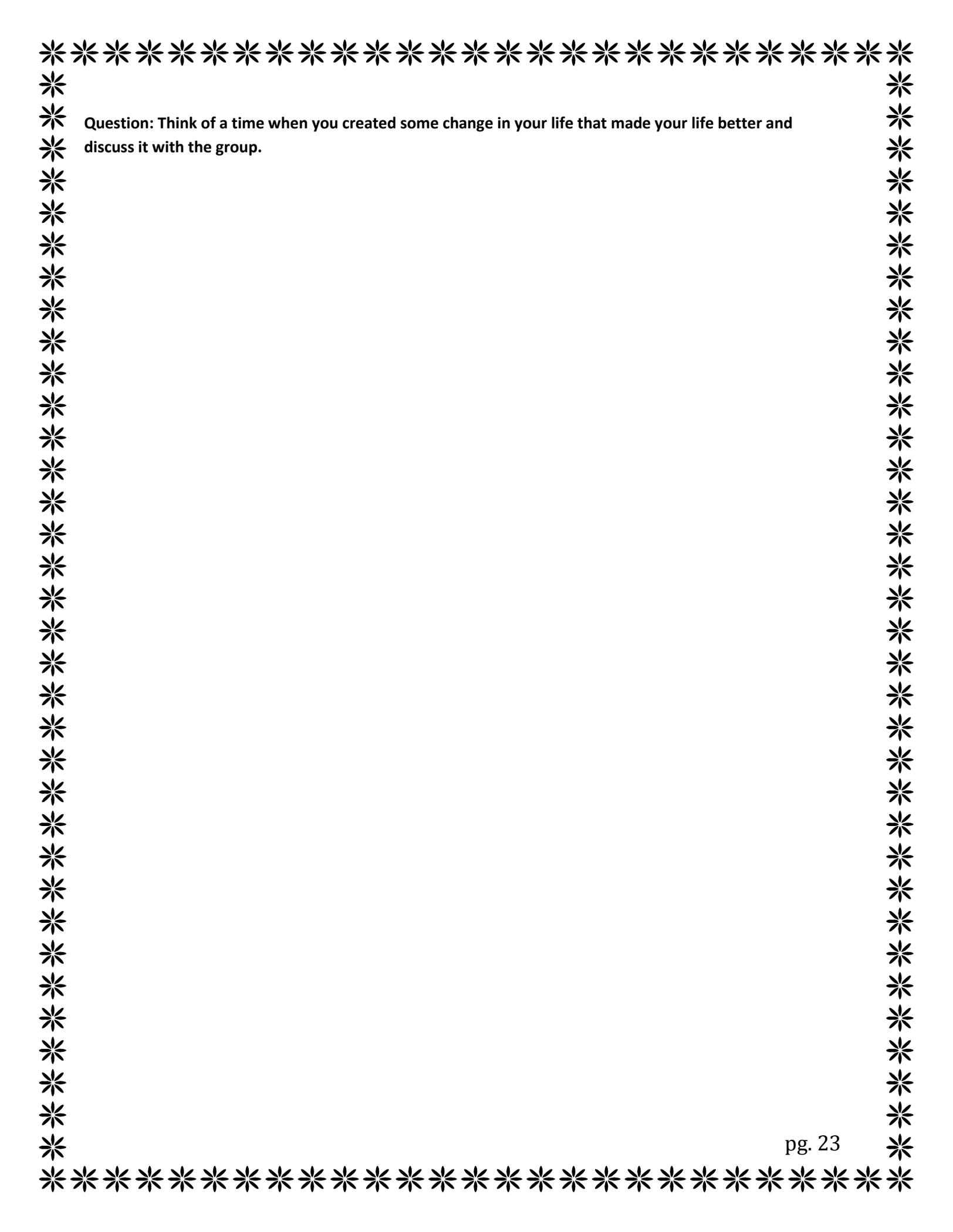
Activity: (Supplies needed: {optional-whiteboard and markers} pen and paper)

Take about 5 minutes and make a list of strengths you bring to your friendships or to the people in your life, including any from the list above. Now share three of your strengths with the rest of the group. How can you give yourself credit for these positive attributes?

Creating Change

List the things you would like to work on that you think would make it easier for you to make and keep friends. Acknowledging that you want to improve and reminding yourself of this desire from time to time will create the personal change you are seeking. Ask your family members and friends to support you in these efforts. You may want to ask a health care professional for additional resources and support. Self-help books may also give you ideas for creating this change. Of most importance is your determination to change. Remember that everyone has areas that need improvement. Change takes time. Pat yourself on the back for your efforts.

Ask participants to think about something they may want to improve in themselves. How will this change help make it easier to make and keep friends? Ask participants the following question and discuss answers with the group.

A decorative border of asterisks surrounds the page. The border consists of a top row of 25 asterisks, a bottom row of 25 asterisks, and vertical columns of 25 asterisks on the left and right sides.

Question: Think of a time when you created some change in your life that made your life better and discuss it with the group.

Session Fourteen: Building Skills that Enhance Friendships Continued

Goals for the lesson: Participants will learn how life circumstances can sometimes make friendships difficult. Participants will also learn about when to consider ending a friendship.

Life circumstances that make friendships difficult

Factors over which neither you nor the other person have any control can make it difficult to be friends. You may want to be friends or closer friends, but one of these issues may get in the way:

- Illness
- Distance
- Stress
- Overwork
- Fear
- Financial problems or poverty
- Differences in expectations
- Extreme differences in interests
- Lack of transportation

It is important to acknowledge these difficulties, but don't give up on the friendship if you don't want to! These factors are challenging, but not impossible! Some factors must simply be accepted-such as distance, and others you can work on changing-such as fear or overwork. For example, a woman in her fifties has been very close friends most of her life with a woman she first met at camp when she was a child. Now they live in different states and their busy lives keep them from being together as much as they would like. They keep their friendship strong through weekly emails.

Ask for several volunteers from the group to share a time when one of life's circumstances made it difficult to keep up with a friendship. Then ask the rest of the group for feedback and suggestions about possible ways to resolve the difficulty. Record the difficulty and suggestions on a whiteboard for the group. Now repeat this activity with other volunteers. Brainstorming resolutions should become easier with practice.

Activity: (Supplies needed: whiteboard and markers)

Who wants to volunteer? Talk about a life circumstance that makes it difficult to keep up with one of your friendships or with the group. Ask the rest of the group to come up with five possible ways to resolve this difficulty.

Is this friendship a good idea? Sometimes it is better to avoid getting closely involved with a person or to end a friendship. You may want to stop being friends with a person if they:

- Share personal information about others
- Do all the talking and not listening
- Violate your boundaries
- Put others or you down

- Tease, ridicule, taunt, “badmouth” friends and family
- Lie or are dishonest
- Want you to be their friend only or want you to spend all of your time with them
- Want to always know where you are and who you are with
- Don’t want to be seen with you in public
- Are clingy or very needy
- Talk inappropriately about sex or personal matters
- Ask questions that make you feel uncomfortable
- Ask for risky favors
- Engage in illegal behavior
- Are physically, emotionally or sexually abusive

Before you end the friendship, you may want to talk about the troubling behavior. If the person stops doing it, you may be able to continue your friendship. To help you decide if you want to end a friendship, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is this person always this way or just this way once in a while?
2. Is this person having a hard time right now that might be affecting their behavior?
3. Are you having a hard time right now that may be affecting your feelings and the way you see things?
4. Do you often enjoy this friendship or do you sometimes feel hurt?

You may be tempted to pursue a relationship with someone even though the person treats you or others badly. However, most people agree it is better not to have a certain friend than to have a person treat you badly. If the things another person says to you or does to you make you feel hurt and the person won’t stop doing those kinds of things, he or she is not your friend. It is always your choice whether or not to be friends with another person. Reach out to others for information and advice, but the final decision should always be yours.

Discussion Question: Have you ever been in a situation where you think it may be a good idea to end a friendship? Talk about this with the group.

Session Fifteen: Time to Get Started

Goals for the lesson: Participants will identify a goal for themselves about making and keeping friends. They will make a list of small goals that they will accomplish to help them reach their goal.

The common-sense information in this curriculum comes from people like you. It will help you in strengthening those friendships you already have and in making and keeping new friends-friends who will increase your wellness and satisfaction with life. Decide for yourself how best to begin the process of making and keeping friendships.

This is the final lesson in the Making and Keeping Friends curriculum. Acknowledge the group for their participation and let them know that the expectation for this session is for them to review their main reason for attending the group (from the index cards created in the first session). Ask participants if their goal has changed and what they have learned to help them reach their goal.

Activity: (Supplies needed: index cards and pens)

Write down a goal for yourself about making and keeping friends. Write down the steps you will take to reach your goal. Keep this information where you will see it and remember to continue to work on it. How will you give yourself a “pat on the back” when you have reached your goal?

Set a small daily goal for yourself each day that will help you make new friend or keep your friendships strong like:

- Calling one friend or someone you know well
- Doing something nice for someone else
- Finding out about a support group
- Attending a support group
- Sending a friend or someone else you now a card or an email

Activity: (Supplies needed: whiteboard and markers)

List some other possible daily goals that you think you could achieve. Now you are well on the way to expanding your circle of friends!

What are your “take-aways” from this group? What have you learned in the group that will help you to make more friends?

Resources:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Center for Mental Health Services

www.samhsa.gov

Consumer Organization and Networking Technical Assistance Center

www.contac.org

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

www.dbsalliance.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org

National Empowerment Center

www.power2u.org

National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse

www.mhselfhelp.org

<http://www.recreationtherapy.com/articles/lutfiyya.htm>

Making and Keeping Friends—A Self-Help Guide. <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA-3716/SMA-3716.pdf>

NAMI <http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Teens-Young-Adults/Friendship-and-Mental-Health#sthash.zbkrdnN1.dpuf>