

# Surviving College 101

## Navigating Friendships

### Workbook



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## **Navigating Friendships 101**

This session is intended to help increase your understanding and knowledge about how to build and maintain healthy, effective friendships. We will provide you with the skills to maintain and strengthen friendships.

### **Myths about College Friendships**

Let's start by exploring common myths about college friendships.

- The friends you make freshman year will be the friends you have throughout college
- If you don't make friends freshman year you cannot find friends in college
- If someone doesn't want to room with me, they don't want to be my friend
- You can only join clubs and organizations freshman year
- People are in class to learn and not interested in meeting new people
- When I am at an event and there is a group of people talking together, they are not open to having new people join
- I must be part of Greek life to make friends
- I must be friends with my roommate

Although some of these statements may appear true at first glance, they are all false. There is no deadline for making friends throughout life, you are allowed to change friend groups, you can make friends in a variety of settings, it's never too late to join something new, and everyone you meet does not have to be your friend; it's okay to have acquaintances.

Throughout this workbook you will learn ways to meet new people, identify the important qualities you want in a friend, and develop skills to grow and maintain friendships.

### **Part 1: Making Friends**

We are going to start by talking about how to develop our social networks on campus. Let's start with a discussion about what our expectations were about meeting friends in college. Did your expectations match with your reality?

Loneliness is a feeling that many encounter as they begin the transition to college. Fear is another feeling that students may experience. Both emotions can keep you from getting out there and meeting people. It is important to know that these feelings are normal and common for many college students. If you feel these emotions, it is normal **AND ALSO**, you may have to push yourself a little harder to do things that will help you meet people.

### **Meeting people can be looked at as a series of tasks**

We are going to review each task and discuss barriers in achieving these tasks.

**Step One:** Be positive. The more positive the energy you put out, the more likely you are to receive positive energy in return. Remember all human beings are lovable. How can you put out positive energy? See step two.

**Step Two:** RELAX and BE YOURSELF! Trying to be different to please others compromises your individuality and your integrity. Be proud of who you are. We all have faults and things we may not like about ourselves. We don't judge others nearly as harshly as we judge ourselves. So go easy on yourself. People will like you for you, taking the good with the not so good. No one is perfect, so don't try to be! And the more you are yourself, the more relaxed you will be, because you won't be focusing on what you think you should be doing. The more relaxed you are, the easier it is to get along with and interact with others.

**Step Three:** Look for people who are close by you and for people who are similar to you. To find people who you might like and who might like you, it is important to make sure that you are frequently around and visible to other people. Many people find friends who are classmates or members of groups they join, or who work at or go to the same places.

Figure out who and what type of people you want to hang out with. People generally connect with those who are most like themselves. If you are athletic and like to either participate in or watch sports and you know of someone with similar interests, you may want to ask them to attend some games with you. Sharing similarities with people can be fun. It also allows you the opportunity to get to know someone a little better. Try to think about who you are as a person, and what kind of friend you would like. The better you know

yourself, the better you will be able to identify what you will like in other people. We explore what values are important to us later in this workbook.

**Step Four.** Put yourself out there. Get involved in activities and events that you enjoy. Chances are you'll meet people there who enjoy similar activities. You must go where people are in order to meet people! Don't sit around waiting for them to come to you. Join a club or organization. Attend lectures and programs that seem interesting. Go to university functions, like sporting events and socials. Join a study group or go to the library. Volunteer or get involved with causes that you care about. The more chances you have to meet people, the better the odds are that you will!

You may be thinking I know what I like to do but *where should I go?* There are many places on campus to go and meet people. There are lots of things going on all over campus -- all the time! Read posters and flyers that are posted. They are there for one reason -- YOU! Various organizations, departments, and individuals plan activities for students to take advantage of. Most of the time they are free or at a reduced student fee, so all you have to do is show up!

Some ideas for you to get started are:

- Check flyers and postings for upcoming events. If you live in University Housing, these may be physically posted in a central location, and also posted via your residence hall social media.
- Read the campus newswire for programs and future happenings.
- Talk to classmates and floormates or an RA to find out what is going on that you might be interested in.
- Visit the Union-- there are always events and programs going on or being advertised there.
- Join an intramural team, club, or organization of interest to you: UREC (<https://urec.uark.edu/intramural-sports>) Volunteer Action Center (<https://volunteer.uark.edu/>) & HogSync (<https://hogsync.uark.edu/>)
- Listen to others talk -- no, not eavesdropping! When you are in conversation listen to what others have to say about what's going on around campus.

**Step Five.** Stay connected. After you have met some people that you like and feel comfortable with, stay in contact with them. Yes, this might take some effort on your part, but if you want to have connections, you need to make the effort. You can call or visit on a regular basis. You may have a regular meeting

time based on a class or organization you are a part of with them. During that time, you can make plans to do things with them. Pick up on their cues. If they call you back right away, or if they wait a week to get back to you, it may tell you what level of friendship they are looking for from you.

Take a moment to list 3 things you do that help your chances of connecting with other people.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List 3 things you do that may cause other people to avoid getting to know you better:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Take a moment to reflect on what you can do to overcome these barriers. Specifically, what prevents you from making/maintaining friendships?

### **Conversation Enhancers**

You are all here because you desire to have friendships and connections. However, sometimes we may not know how to start or continue a conversation with others. Below you will find a list of conversation enhancers that are helpful to start and maintain connections.

- Make small talk
  - Sometimes it's hard to think of things to say. **But generally, if you are in a particular setting you can talk about things specific to that setting.** For example, in class, you can talk about a particular assignment, "Where did you find information on our homework topic?" In the residence halls, you can talk about classes, about living arrangements. You can watch movies or TV together and talk about that, too.
- Ask open-ended questions, as opposed to closed-ended questions.
  - An open-ended question is one where the person is asked a question that can't simply be answered by "yes" or "no". These help to

continue the conversation because you can ask follow-up responses to what the person has shared.

- Respond to questions from others and ask follow-up questions that are open-ended.
- When you identify similarities with someone, point them out and ask follow-up questions about the common interest.

## **Part 2: Maintaining Friendships**

In this second part of this workbook, we will explore strategies to maintain and strengthen our friendships.

### **Healthy Friendships**

When making friends it's important to identify if the relationship is a healthy one. The diagram on the next page highlights the differences between healthy versus unhealthy relationships. Healthy relationships are rooted in love and mutual respect while unhealthy relationships are rooted in power and control.

Friendships aren't always easy, but there is never an excuse for abuse of any type within any type of relationship (romantic or otherwise). Healthy friendships are built on a foundation of respect. Knowing the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships can help you build new relationships in college.

**Healthy relationships** are based on the following to create a nurturing and loving environment:

<b>Mutual respect</b>	-Listening non-judgmentally -Valuing each other's opinions	<b>Separate identities</b>	-Having friends outside the relationship -Exploring your individual identities
<b>Trust and support</b>	-Respecting each other's personal space and time -Overcoming issues of jealousy and resentment	<b>Good communication</b>	-Being honest with your feelings to yourself and your partner -Communicating openly and truthfully
<b>Honesty</b>	-Accepting responsibility for yourself	<b>Forgiveness</b>	-Forgiving past mistakes -Admitting your own mistakes and apologizing
<b>Fairness and equality</b>	-Being willing to compromise -Seeking goals that satisfy both partners	<b>Fighting fair</b>	-Listening to each other -Not assuming things -Not criticizing each other

**Unhealthy relationships** often use the following to gain power and control:

<b>Isolation</b>	-Controlling where you go and who you see -Making you believe they are the only one who cares about you -Limiting activities outside the relationship	<b>Threats</b>	-Making threats to hurt you, family, friends, belongings, or pets -Threatening to leave or commit suicide
<b>Intimidation</b>	-Making you afraid to use certain looks, actions, or gestures -Destroying property, abusing pets, displaying weapons	<b>Forcible Sex</b>	-Manipulating or making threats in order to get sex -Getting you drunk or drugging you to get sex
<b>Physical, emotional, financial, and/or abuse</b>	-Hitting, pushing, slapping, or kicking -Putting you down _playing mind games -Making you feel guilty -Using monetary means to control your decisions or actions	<b>Minimizing and Denying</b>	-Being unwilling to take responsibility for the abuse -Making light of the abuse -Blaming the abuse on you



## Values

In addition to some standard traits that are present in healthy relationships, people should also be aware of the values that are important to them. In order to have friendships that feel meaningful, we need to have a sense of our needs and wants.

When we're talking about values, we mean the things that you need in order to feel as though you are living life in an authentic way. **Values are the firmly held beliefs about what gives you, and your relationships with those around you, meaning.** So, a core value might be something like faithfulness or humor. Values can overlap with traits of a healthy relationship, but they do not have to.

You might find that your values vary from one relationship to another. For instance, in a classmate, you might greatly value being hardworking. Conversely, in a friendship, you might value someone whom is supportive and kindhearted. And, because relationships are complicated, there might be different values that you have during different times in the same relationship. Perhaps humor is extremely important to you, but it takes a backseat to "supportive" when you are feeling sad and need some support.

Let's take a few minutes for you to begin to identify some of the values that you have for your relationships.

## Common Values

1. **Acceptance:** to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life, etc.
2. **Adventure:** to actively seek, create, or explore novel experiences
3. **Assertiveness:** to respectfully stand up for my rights and what I want
4. **Authenticity:** to be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself
5. **Beauty:** to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment, etc.
6. **Caring:** to be caring towards myself, others, the environment, etc.
7. **Challenge:** to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve
8. **Compassion:** to act with kindness towards those who are suffering
9. **Connection:** to engage fully in what I am doing and be present with others
10. **Contribution:** to help or make a positive difference to others or myself
11. **Conformity:** to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations
12. **Cooperation:** to be cooperative and collaborative with others
13. **Courage:** to be brave; to persist in the face of fear or difficulty
14. **Creativity:** to be creative or innovative
15. **Curiosity:** to be open-minded and interested; to explore and discover
16. **Encouragement:** to encourage behavior that I value in others or myself
17. **Equality:** to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa

18. **Excitement:** to seek, create, and engage in activities that are stimulating or thrilling
19. **Fairness:** to be fair to others or myself
20. **Fitness:** to maintain, improve, and look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing
21. **Flexibility:** to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances
22. **Freedom:** to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise
23. **Friendliness:** to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others
24. **Forgiveness:** to be forgiving towards others or myself
25. **Fun:** to be fun loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities
26. **Generosity:** to be generous, sharing and giving, to others or myself
27. **Gratitude:** to be appreciative of myself, others and life
28. **Honesty:** to be honest, truthful, and sincere with others and myself
29. **Humor:** to see and appreciate the humorous side of life
30. **Humility:** to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves
31. **Industry:** to be industrious, hard-working, dedicated
32. **Independence:** to be self-supportive and choose my own way of doing things
33. **Intimacy:** to open up, reveal, and share myself -- emotionally or physically -- in my close relationships
34. **Justice:** to uphold justice and fairness for myself and others
35. **Kindness:** to be compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself and others
36. **Love:** to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself and others
37. **Mindfulness:** to be open to and curious about my present, here-and-now experience
38. **Order:** to be orderly and organized
39. **Open-mindedness:** to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly
40. **Patience:** to remain calm during difficult times
41. **Persistence:** to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties
42. **Pleasure:** to create and give pleasure to others or myself
43. **Power:** the ability to direct or influence the behavior of others, such as taking charge, leading, organizing
44. **Reciprocity:** to build relationships with a balance of giving and taking
45. **Respect:** to be polite, considerate and show myself and others positive regard
46. **Responsibility:** to be responsible and accountable for my actions
47. **Romance:** to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection for another person
48. **Safety:** to secure, protect, or ensure the wellbeing of others or myself
49. **Self-awareness:** to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions
50. **Self-care:** to look after my health and wellbeing and get my needs met
51. **Self-development:** to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience.
52. **Self-control:** to act in accordance with my own ideals
53. **Sensuality:** to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate my senses
54. **Sexuality:** to explore or express my sexuality
55. **Spirituality:** to connect with things bigger than myself
56. **Skillfulness:** to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them
57. **Supportiveness:** to be helpful, encouraging, and available to others or myself
58. **Trust:** to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable

## **Identifying your Boundaries**

In order to maintain our friendships, it's important to know what our boundaries are. We've all heard about boundaries, right? For those of you who haven't spent time thinking about it...or have never even heard the term...boundaries are the things that we are willing to accept and not willing to accept in relationships. The amount of intimacy and autonomy that we want or need in our relationships is one area where we may establish boundaries. Boundaries come up in lots of different areas, like what we're okay with physically, including things like hugging or how we like our personal space to be kept. It may also be what we're sexually okay with or what we are okay with emotionally. Our boundaries come up a lot when we are making or sustaining relationships! After all, we often need to consider what we are okay with physically, sexually, and emotionally in our relationships!

People's boundaries can vary quite a bit for lots of different reasons, from cultural expectations to family upbringing or personality. And, you might notice that people's boundaries might change from situation to situation. For instance, you might be perfectly fine with your sibling going through your closet to borrow clothes but get really upset if the person across the hall that you barely know tries to!

Identifying our boundaries is an important part of developing and maintaining relationships. Think of boundaries like a "no trespassing" sign. Those signs tell you just how far you can go and what is off-limits. Boundaries work the same way, telling us what is okay in our relationships and what is off limits or unacceptable. When we notice that someone is not respecting our boundaries, or if we don't follow our own boundaries, we may notice that something isn't quite working. We may feel taken advantage of, frustrated, disconnected, or confused. So it's easy to see why boundaries are so important! The really good news is that when you identified the characteristics of healthy relationships and your values you likely already started to consider or form your boundaries!

## **Setting Boundaries**

How comfortable to do you feel about setting boundaries in friendships? What keeps you from being able to set healthy boundaries? Establishing and setting boundaries can be uncomfortable or even difficult for people. Below are a few key points to help you communicate and set your boundaries in a relationship.

**What to Say:** You always have the right to say “no”. When doing so, express yourself clearly and without ambiguity so there is no doubt what you want.

“I’m not comfortable with this”	“Please don’t do that”	“Not at this time”	“I can’t do that for you”
“This doesn’t work for me”	“I’ve decided not to”	“This is not acceptable”	“I’m drawing the line at ____”
“I don’t want to do that”			

**What to do:**

<b>Use Confident Body Language:</b> Face the other person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume (not too quiet, and not too loud).	<b>Be Respectful:</b> Avoid yelling, using put-downs, or giving the silent treatment. It’s okay to be firm, but your message will be better received if you are respectful.
<b>Plan Ahead:</b> Think about what you want to say, and how you will say it, before entering a difficult discussion. This can help you feel more confident about your position.	<b>Compromise:</b> When appropriate, listen and consider the needs of the other person. You never have to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.

Let’s take a look at some examples of setting boundaries below before practicing on your own.

**Examples:**

<b>Situation:</b> You notice your roommate has been eating your food in the fridge. You never discussed plans to share food, and don’t want them eating what you bought.
<b>Response:</b> “I’d like to keep our food separate. If there is something of mind that you want, please ask me before taking it.”

<b>Situation:</b> Your friend calls you at 11pm to discuss issues she is having with her boyfriend. You need to wake up at 6am.
<b>Response:</b> “I can tell you’re upset. I want to talk to you, but I need to go to bed. Maybe we can talk tomorrow afternoon.”

**Practice:**

<b>Situation:</b> You invited a friend over for the evening, but now it’s getting late. You would like to get ready for bed, but your friend seems unaware of how late it is.
<b>Response:</b>

**Situation:** A good friend asks you on a date. You are not interested in being more than friends. You would like to let them down clearly, but gently.

**Response:**

### **Communication**

Now let's shift our discussion to communication. Communication is the cornerstone of making our values and needs in a friendship known. It is important for creating new relationships as well as maintaining our existing ones.

Communication is not only the words that we speak, but how we say them, including our non-verbal communication, like eye contact or tone of voice. Communication also occurs when we choose not to interact with others, like when we choose not to say "Hi" to our classmates. We might communicate well or communicate poorly, but we cannot NOT communicate, even when we remain silent. Additionally, while good communication may not resolve all problems, problems cannot be resolved without good communication.

Let's take an inventory of how your communication currently works by completing the questions below.

As you're filling it out, here are some things to ask yourself:

- In what ways are you communicating well?
- How about ways that you are communicating poorly? For instance, do you find your communication is better with strangers or people you know?
- Are you better at specific types of communication than others? For example, are you better at "getting to know you" talk than you are at conflict?
- How effective are you at making your values known?

Take some time to develop a list of your strengths and areas of growth in communication. Remember, having a sense of yourself, including areas of growth, is key to developing healthy relationships.

### Communication Inventory

The following questions are to help you begin to explore your communication strengths and areas of growth. To help you reflect on questions 1 and 2, think about your communication as it relates to: the people with whom you communicate, your physical and emotional state, time of day, and the type of communication as starting points.

1. When do you communicate well? (i.e., when I've had time to think, in the mornings)

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2. When do you communicate poorly? (i.e., when tired, with my family)

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To help you reflect on questions 3 and 4, think about: your tone of voice, level of speaking, body language, and behaviors surrounding your language as starting points.

3. What does your good communication look like? (i.e., calm tone, I listen)

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4. What does your poor communication look like? (i.e., the silent treatment, slamming doors, etc.)

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### Aggressive/Passive/P-A/Assertive

Let's explore different types of communication: on the next page there is a helpful handout that breaks down each of these types of communication.

The first is "**passive**" communication. In this type of communication, someone avoids expressing their opinions, needs, or values. Often, the **person prioritizes the needs, values, and opinions of others over their own**. So, for example, a passive communicator won't tell their partner that they were hurt when their partner broke a promise, because they are concerned that expressing their feelings might hurt their partner or they may hope that their partner can tell what they are feeling

without them saying it. In this style, frustrations tend to build, **sometimes resulting in outbursts over time.**

Passive communication is like a pressure cooker. Frustration and hurt (the pressure) builds and builds. Without release of some of the frustration, the pressure boils over, leading them to explode. After these explosions, they can feel really guilty, often causing them to avoid expressing themselves all over again, repeating the cycle.

Can you think of a time when you have communicated in a passive way? Or perhaps a time when you've noticed that someone else is communicating in a passive way?

Okay. So, conversely, "**aggressive**" communicators are very comfortable expressing their needs, values, and opinions. Often times, they might **struggle to see the needs, values, and opinions of others.** For example, if an aggressive communicator was upset because their partner broke a promise, they might yell, blame, or criticize them and interrupt their partner when they attempt to speak. This kind of communication **can also include different types of abuse** (verbal, physical, sexual, etc.).

Imagine aggressive communication to be like a raging fire. Aggression (the fire) spreads and takes over everything in its path, even if that means hurting others, kind of like a raging fire may destroy homes or surrounding nature when it spreads.

Have you ever communicated with someone who uses this type of communication?

The next style is "**passive-aggressive**" communication. You may notice that this style of communication is not listed on your handout. This is because, as the name implies, this style combines passive and aggressive traits. In this style, the communicator **appears passive, but communicates in subtle or indirect ways that show anger.** For example, if their partner broke a promise, a passive-aggressive communicator might feel angry but tell their partner that they aren't angry. In the meantime, they might act sarcastically towards their partner or conveniently "forget" to respond to their partner's text messages. Typically, when someone uses this type of communication, they may be feeling resentful or stuck but uncomfortable expressing their feelings directly, so it comes out in other ways.

Finally, there's “**assertive**” communication. This communication style, like aggressive communication, involves **being able to express** your values, needs, and desires. Unlike aggressive communication, though, assertive communication **respects the values and needs of the other person**. If an assertive communicator were hurt by their partner breaking a promise, they might calmly tell them, “I felt hurt when you broke your promise and would like for you to keep promises in the future.” They would also be open to hearing their partner's perspective and having a conversation about it. **When someone is assertive, they do not have the expectation that they will always get what they want**. Instead, the value in assertive communication is making your needs and desires known in a clear way while respecting input from others.

**Communication Practice**

Okay, now that we are aware of the different styles of communication let’s see what they look like using the following example:

Example: *Sally is unhappy with James because he told a secret that Sally told James in confidence.*

<b>Passive Response:</b>	<b>Aggressive Response:</b>	<b>Passive/Aggressive Response:</b>	<b>Assertive Response:</b>
<i>Sally doesn't say anything. When James mentions what he said to Sally, she thinks to herself, "That's okay, he didn't mean anything by it."</i>	<i>Sally find James in the Union and yells at him, saying "You're the worst friend! What is wrong with you?!" When James attempts to respond, Sally yells over him.</i>	<i>Sally doesn't confront James. She is sarcastic with James for a week after the event but denies that anything is wrong when he asks her.</i>	<i>Sally talks with James in private, saying in a calm voice, "I was hurt and angry when you told your friends about my secret. It feels like it is hard to trust you now."</i>

Considering the following questions, what might your reactions be?

- If you were in Sally’s place, how would you feel if you responded as Sally does above? Would you feel more or less connected to the person speaking?



- If you were in James' place, how would you feel if Sally addressed you in this way? Would you feel more or less connected to the person on the receiving end?

As we can see from this example, different forms of communication can impact the level of connection that we feel towards one another and our responses.

While we generally encourage assertive communication, it does not mean that the other types of communication are not needed at certain times. For instance, if you are faced with someone whom is extremely aggressive, it might be more challenging or potentially unsafe to be assertive. Passive communication might be a better way to communicate until you can get to a safer situation.

We also want to acknowledge that being assertive doesn't mean that we won't experience strong emotions, like anger. We want to acknowledge that our strong feelings can be really helpful! **Emotions can give us important information** about our experiences, which may help us recognize our needs, goals, and desires. Also, even when having strong emotions, we can choose **how we express** these emotions, whether we choose to give someone the silent treatment, share our feelings, or yell. These reactions can impact connection, as we saw in our worksheet.

We can see that different communication styles can impact others in various ways. We can't control how our partner feels but we can definitely choose a communication style that has a greater chance of being effective in a given situation.

### **Barriers to Communication**

There are many barriers to communication, like rehearsing what you're going to say instead of listening, listening with the intention of disagreeing, our surroundings, or our emotional state. Let's take a look at the list below to start identifying some things that get in the way of good communication with others. Please star, circle, or highlight the barriers that you experience.

1. **Mind Reading.** Assuming you know what someone else means, often before they complete their statement.
2. **Physical:** Objects or distractions get in the way.
3. **Rehearsing.** Focusing on what you will say next (instead of listening).
4. **Non-verbals:** When your words and nonverbal signals are inconsistent.
5. **Distraction/Daydreaming.** Focusing on things outside the conversation.

6. **Judging.** Making judgements about what is being said or about the speaker.
7. **Filtering.** Selective listening. Hearing what you want to and ignoring the rest.
8. **Sparring.** Listening just so you can disagree.
9. **Derailing.** Changing the subject or making jokes, especially when uncomfortable with the topic.
10. **Misperceptions:** Misunderstanding what someone is saying when they speak.
11. **Culture/Language:** Different beliefs about experiences, relating, and what is “right” or “wrong” in communication.
12. **Superficial:** Having a hard time accessing experiences beyond surface level.
13. **Advising.** Wanting to “fix” or offer needless advice.
14. **Placating.** Too quickly agreeing, sometimes as a way to make the other person stop talking.
15. **Dumping:** Purging concerns without space for the other person to communicate.
16. **Being Right.** Focusing on proving that you are not wrong, often times without taking into consideration the other person’s feelings or experience.
17. **Boredom.** Either due to the topic or because you’ve been listening for prolonged periods.
18. **Heightened Emotions.** It can be challenging to attend to a conversation when you’re emotionally activated (positively or negatively).

### **Correcting Barriers to Communication**

Now that you have identified factors that might get in the way of your communication and connecting with others, let’s look at some ways that we can “trouble shoot” each of these. Let’s take a look below at some things we can do. As you review these, please star, circle, or highlight the tips you plan to try.

\*\*One of the first steps for correcting these barriers is to engage in self-reflection and notice when you may be doing them. Additionally, the following are helpful tools:

1. **Mind Reading.** Allow someone to finish their statement before speaking.
2. **Physical:** Try to have face-to-face conversations. Put distractions away. Gently ask to have the conversation at another time if you cannot avoid the distractions.
3. **Rehearsing.** Practice focusing on the communicator’s words and paraphrase what is said.
4. **Non-verbals:** Pay attention to your actions as well as your words. Self check-in about your emotional state. Remember culture impacts the meaning of many non-verbals.
5. **Distraction/Daydreaming.** Self check-in to see if now is a good time to talk. If not, ask to speak later. If you cannot delay, practice visualizing the words in your head.

6. **Judging.** Attempt to suspend judgement, checking in with where the judgment comes from. Focus on your disagreement with the message, not judgement of the person.
7. **Filtering.** Highlight to yourself the items that you may typically ignore.
8. **Sparring.** Attempt to understand the person’s message
9. **Derailing.** Respond on-point to what was said, or avoid making commentary and use enhancers if you are unable.
10. **Misperceptions:** Ask for clarification or clarify what you meant.
11. **Culture/Language:** Take steps to understand cultural differences. Ask for clarification when it seems that there might be a difference. Avoid judgement—there is no one “right” way to communicate.
12. **Superficial:** Self-Reflection: check in with how you’re feeling, what you think, and if you want to share those with the other person.
13. **Advising.** Try to refrain from giving advice until asked. Step back and be supportive. Let them know you are there if needed.
14. **Placating.** Too quickly agreeing, sometimes as a way to make the other person stop talking.
15. **Dumping:** If you are dumping, notice about how much time/space you have taken up. Set goals to scale back. If you’re receiving, set boundaries where you can (i.e., set a time limit).
16. **Being Right.** Focus on the other person’s feelings or experience. You may disagree about something, but everyone’s feelings are valid.
17. **Boredom.** Self check-in to see if now is a good time to talk. If not, ask to speak later. If you can’t delay, practice visualizing the person’s words in your head.
18. **Heightened Emotions.** Let the other person know that right now is not a good time but you are happy to talk later. Find ways to care for your emotions to prevent them from negatively affecting communication.

### Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication Skills

Below are additional communication skills which are both verbal AND non-verbal. What communication skills do you do well? Are there areas where you struggle? Select a technique that you would like to practice.

1. **Attending:** Orienting yourself towards the person speaking.
2. **Eye Contact:** Making contact, but not staring. Respect cultural differences.
3. **Facial Expressions:** Consistent with tone of conversation.
4. **Voice:** Monitor tone, volume, pauses, speed.



5. **Using I.** Focus on your experience and point of view.
6. **Saying No.** Setting limits for yourself where you need to.
7. **Use Humor.** When appropriate, humor can break down barriers.



*I feel....*

8. **Organize.** Have a sense of your points in the communication while remaining open to what the other person is communicating.

9. **Be Clear.** Speak directly in order to avoid confusion or misunderstandings.

10. **Listen.** Remember that communication involves giving and receiving information.

## **Listening Skills**

One important aspect of communication isn't about speaking at all. It's about how we're listening to others around us! We'd like to highlight listening because it's often overlooked when we think about how we're connecting with others. We can get so focused on our message or conveying our message to the other person that we stop being present in the moment and miss out on what the other person is saying and experiencing. Have you ever had the experience of meeting someone new, but you're so caught up in what you're saying, how you're saying it, and your "end goal" for the conversation, that you forget to actually listen to what the person was saying? It's easy for this to happen, especially when we meet new people, are preoccupied, or feel passionate about our own perspective.

What does good listening even look like? How do we attend to another person's experience? Let's look at a few more ways that we can meaningfully listen below. While reviewing this list, please star or circle a skill that you would like to practice.

1. **Check In.** Check in with yourself. Notice if now is a time when you can commit to listening. If not, gently ask for a rain check to continue the discussion at another time.
2. **Prepare.** Prior to listening, put other things out of your mind and focus on staying present.
3. **Stop Talking.** Don't interrupt, talk over, or complete someone's sentences.
4. **Delivery.** Pay attention to how someone is communicating (i.e., tone, volume), as it can provide useful information about emotions.
5. **Empathize.** Attempt to see the person's perspective and keep an open mind.
6. **Enhancers.** Use your nonverbals to show you are listening. Smile, nod, or use "uh huh" while the other person is talking.
7. **Focus.** Don't pay attention to other tasks, interests, etc. Focus on the speaker's words.
8. **Be Patient.** Don't jump in to speak the second that there is a pause. Wait until you know the person is done speaking (it's okay to ask in a gentle way!)

9. **Nonverbals.** Attend to gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbals, which are important cues in communication.
10. **Avoid judgement.** People communicate in different ways. Focus on the communicator's meaning, instead of rejecting the message based on how it is said or the person who said it.
11. **Label words.** Make a mental image of what you are being told (this helps you remember it later).
12. **Reflect.** Paraphrase or reflect what you heard to make sure you got it right.

## **Summary**

In this session we have focused on a number of topics, including myths about making friends, steps to meet people, what we value in friendships, and the roles that communication and listening have in maintaining friendships.

We hope that you have found this session to be helpful. Remember that many of these skills take time and you're still going to need practice. We also encourage you to continue practicing self-compassion. None of us get it "right" all the time and, even with the best of skills, we will still experience conflict or may have challenges connecting with some people. If you need any additional support, feel free to reach out to CAPS to schedule an initial consultation appointment by calling 479-575-5276.