

Keeping friendships going

Easy · 10 min to read; a few minutes a week · Free

Friendships fade when nobody reaches out, so be the one who does: check in between plans, keep a standing routine, listen more than you advise, and do what you say you'll do. Short, regular contact counts. If a friendship has drifted, a simple "I've been thinking about you" text is a fine way back.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Your phone's contacts or a short list of people you want to keep
- ☐ Your calendar

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Know why it's worth the effort.** HHS says poor social relationships, isolation and loneliness can raise the risk of heart disease by 29% and stroke by 32%. NIH says about 1 in 3 adults report feeling lonely.
- 2 **Know it hits young adults too.** NIH reports an analysis of more than 128,000 people that found loneliness is higher in young adulthood and older adulthood, and dips in mid-life.
- 3 **Check in between get-togethers.** Mayo Clinic says building a close friendship takes time together: see friends often and check in between meetups.
- 4 **Keep a routine.** NIH's toolkit suggests a shared routine, like a regular walking schedule with a friend. A standing call, game night or gym time means you don't have to plan from scratch.
- 5 **Use every kind of contact.** Stay in touch in person, online or by phone. An NIH researcher says even brief interactions can make a difference.
- 6 **Listen, and hold the advice.** Ask what's going on in their life, show you understand when things are hard, and don't give advice unless they ask.
- 7 **Open up yourself.** Sharing your own feelings and worries builds closeness and shows the friend matters to you.
- 8 **Be someone they can count on.** Show up on time, do what you say you'll do, and keep what they tell you private.
- 9 **Be kind on purpose.** Mayo Clinic compares friendship to an emotional bank account: kindness is a deposit and unkindness is a withdrawal.

Watch out A friendship where you're often criticized, pressured or scared isn't one to keep up at any cost. NIH's checklist says to expect respect and honesty in return, and to set boundaries. See Green flags and red flags.

DAD NOTE *Good friends are like a garden. They don't need much, but they need it regularly.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/people/making-and-keeping-friends/keeping-friendships-going/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: Mayo Clinic; National Institutes of Health; NIH News in Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.