

“What is your friendship magnet?”



Many times my friends and family will joke with me when we are out and say “Lisa, you have a magnet, strangers always like to talk to you.” Their observations are correct to a certain degree. We all have an invisible “magnet” that attracts certain types of people. When we are looking to make new friends or are in the process of assessing our current friendships, it is important to take note of the type of friends or potential friends who feel most connected to you. It is also equally important to be aware of what types of people you seek out in your friendships.

Have you ever met someone for the first time and thought immediately, “I want to be friends with her?” Have you ever had the opposite feeling upon meeting someone for the first time, such as a cold chill going down your spine, or a feeling of tension comes over your body? We might call them “hunches” or in psychological terms we may call them feelings of “counter transference”- meaning that a person subconsciously reminds us of someone we remember from an earlier chapter of our life. Sometimes these initial reactions are intuition kicking in and these hunches may be right on target, other times we may be making judgments about others without even realizing it-and we may be denying ourselves opportunities for meaningful friendships.

If you are satisfied with your circle of friends, have you thought about why they are good matches for you? If you are lonely or frustrated with your friends, have you thought about why these patterns occur? What kind of messages-verbally and non-verbally are you projecting to people? Do you think you demonstrate confidence? Do you demonstrate a person who lacks assertiveness and can be taken advantage of? Do you display that you have attentive listening skills? Do you come across as a person who talks excessively about herself and does not check in with others' experiences? Do you come across as boring, snobby or disengaged when in reality you are just shy? These impressions can create the "magnet effect." Sometimes my magnet is a wonderful thing. I come across as outgoing and engaging. I meet a lot of interesting people because I am not afraid of initiating conversations with anyone. My magnet can be problematic because sometimes I meet too many new people at once and find it difficult to have meaningful conversations. I have learned to sit back sometimes and be quieter -and to be an observer to seek out friends who share similar values and interests instead of the person always starting the conversation.



Let's take a moment and contemplate your friendship magnet...



- **If you were observing yourself, how would you describe your communication style when meeting people for the first time? Is this attracting people you enjoy?**
- **Are you giving positive non-verbal messages to others, such as strong eye contact, attentive listening, and appearing interested?**
- **Are you giving too much or too little of a verbal/non-verbal communication, such as talking too much, not talking at all, appearing bored, etc.?**
- **Have you visualized the types of friends whom you would like to attract, for example, more people who share personal interests, more culturally diverse people, more friends of diverse age ranges? If so, are you positioning yourself in the right places to connect with them, for example, book clubs, parenting clubs, meet up groups, etc.?**
- **What kind of people do you admire? Kind, intelligent, assertive, athletic, etc. people? What kind of people would you like to mentor? People in your work field, young mothers, young professionals, etc.**

Sometimes we do not take time to realize that we are responsible for the types of friends we have. Friends just do not “drop out of the sky” when we want them to. The first step is realizing what you are attracting in your friendships and if your “magnet” is working for you. We also need to take action and improve our communication and relationship skills to attract healthy friendships. Lastly, we need to be pragmatic and take action to go places and make connections with people we enjoy and respect. It is important to mentor and support others, but also important to have balances of friendships of those you respect and can learn from.