



CHECK YES OR NO

A FEW POINTERS FOR
FORMING MEANINGFUL NEW
FRIENDSHIPS IN THE ADULT
STAGES OF OUR LIVES

BY LAILA ELISE

Differing opinions certainly exist in regards to exactly how easy – or painstakingly difficult – it can be to meet new people these days. On one hand, technology and the ever-increasing (and overwhelming) assortment of social apps have given us access to databases upon databases filled with prospects. However, has their rise, coupled with the pandemic, also made it harder to meet people in real life? While sifting through the sea of app-prompted romantic matches remains a challenge, finding new meaningful friendships as an adult might be an even more vexing feat, particularly in the age of remote work and virtual gatherings. Here, the experts chime in with research-backed tips for finding – and keeping – new friends in the adult stages of our lives.

Time and effort are non-negotiables. Marisa Franco, Ph.D. and author of *Platonic Love*, said the biggest misconception people have with regards to making new friendships is that they “just happen.”

In fact, one study published by the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships found that people who believe friendship happens purely based on luck were much more likely to experience issues related to loneliness later in life. Why? Dr. Franco explained: “The people who believed making friends took effort put the effort in. They showed up at events and were intentional about making connections.” Waiting around for friendships to fall into our laps has the potential to leave most of us simply waiting around. According to Dr. Franco, we have to put in the work and actively seek out and follow up with new connections.

Don't be afraid to put yourself out there. One big mistake many people tend to make is that they'll attend events, parties, and join clubs with the hopes that new friends will find them, versus proactively trying to connect with people once they are there. Much like attempting to reach any goal, it's not enough to simply show up and hope that the magic happens –

we've got to take control of the situation ourselves. If we are more intentional with our actions, people are going to react positively and in turn be more deliberate with their interactions and efforts as well.

Assume that people will like you.

Dr. Franco also encourages us to understand the “liking gap” phenomenon: the fact that people tend to like us more than we are willing to acknowledge. We humans worry too much that our attempts at conversation won't be well received or that we won't be liked by our peers. People that are confident enough to approach strangers and effortlessly strike up conversations are often operating under the assumption that the other party will like them and be receptive, and most of the time they are right. Sure, we all know an exception to the rule – be it an irritating coworker or intrusive neighbor – but overall we should have more faith in ourselves and trust that others will find us likeable and certainly worthy of getting to know. **1**