

# How to Make Friends in a New Place





# How to Make Friends in a New Place

Your Guide to Getting Connected When You Relocate

Hi there!

There's nothing like the topic of making friends to make you feel like you're in elementary school all over again.

Yet, when you move to a new place you have to make a new network of friends and connections from scratch.... something you may feel quite out of practice in doing!

Here are my top tips to make friends smoothly ... which is a critical step in creating a life you love in your new place. I hope they help you to create wonderful friendships and a supportive, vibrant community no matter where you live.

Warmly,  
Shannon Jones  
Founder, Thriving Relocation

“The need for connection and community is primal,  
as fundamental as the need for air, water, and food.”

~DEAN ORNISH

## Have you moved to a new place?

As a team of professional life coaches specializing in relocation, with personal experience living internationally, we can guide you with effective tools and skilled coaching to help you make tough relocation decisions, prepare for your move with ease, enjoy a smooth start in your new location, and create a life you love once you get there.

We provide individual support and detailed guidebooks in our programs:  
*Confident Decisions, Smooth Transitions, and Path to Thriving.*  
Learn more at [www.thrivingrelocation.com](http://www.thrivingrelocation.com)



## Step One: Mindset

Start your relocation off right with a mindset that will empower you in making friends and connections

### Know why it matters

Research demonstrates that friendships play a vital role in our health- not just emotional health, but physical health, including our cardiovascular system, immune system, sleep, cognitive health, and lifespan.

They also help us to find purpose and meaning.

Meanwhile, loneliness puts us at a greater risk of dementia, heart attack, stroke, and death—more so than smoking 15 cigarettes a day or being obese.

Bottom line- friendships are essential for our happiness and health. They're not self-indulgent or something to neglect because we feel too busy.

### Be intentional

When you've lived in a place for a long time, many of your friendships were likely forged over time through schools you attended, work colleagues, your kids' friends, and other connections you've made over the years. "Making friends" may not have been something you've had to put significant effort into. It's important to shift your mindset when you move to a new place. You'll need to look for opportunities to connect with people, and intentionally put yourself in social situations- casual conversations, parties, coffee chats, or getting involved in an activity.

### Think positive

It can feel discouraging to try to make friends and feel like it's not going anywhere. There are cultural differences that make it hard to understand the social cues, people are sometimes slow to include newcomers, and it may feel like everyone else already has established social networks and aren't interested in getting to know you. Keeping a positive mindset is essential because our thoughts can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Remember that you are planting seeds: each conversation, kind gesture, smile and invitation will eventually blossom, though it may not feel like it at the time.

### Be open-minded

When you imagine making friends, do you have a certain type of person in mind, for instance a certain age, background, hobbies, or view of the world? Of course, it helps to have something in common with our friends, but it's important to be open to the possibility of connecting with people who may be very different from you or your friends back home. It might take a bit more effort, but getting to know new people who are different from yourself can be one of the best parts of living in a new place. And you may discover that you have more in common than you expected.

### Be kind to yourself

Psychologically, it can feel lonely not to have friends, and this can easily lead to blaming yourself or experiencing a reduction in confidence and self-esteem. Remind yourself that there is no shame in not having friends yet and that it takes time. Not having close friends is not a personal fault, but simply the practical facts of the situation because you've just arrived! Be compassionate to yourself and make sure you're connecting with long-distance friends and family in the meantime.

### Give it time (sometimes)

Friendships don't usually develop overnight. It often takes many occasions of getting to know someone, and the passage of time, before the bond of friendship is really felt. You never know when a friendship might develop, given the chance over time. That said, there's nothing wrong with delving into a deeper friendship more quickly, especially with other expats who may be in a similar boat to you, just starting off in building a completely new support system.





## Step Two: Strategy

Actions you can take that will help you to build friendships and community in your new place

### *Say yes*

When you are new somewhere, try to say “yes” to as many social engagements, invitations and activities as possible in the first year- even if they stretch your comfort zone or aren’t an activity you would normally participate in. Your goal at this stage is to plant as many seeds as possible in your relationships. You never know what great connections, experiences, information, or opportunities might come from the people you meet!

### *Get involved in something you love*

When you’re engaged in your passion, you’re more likely to find genuine connections with people who share similar interests. And in the meantime, you’re making your life more meaningful and enjoyable by doing something that matters to you and brings you joy. Bonus: doing something you are passionate about is an important ingredient in adjusting, feeling at home, and finding happiness in your new place.

### *Get involved in something regular*

Relationships develop over time. Seeing the same people repeatedly over time creates the opportunity for people to get to know each other in natural circumstances. Whether it’s a club, exercise class, school pickup, or the local dog park, be consistent and be open to getting to know the people who are there. Even if they don’t become your best friends, casual acquaintances can be an important part of your network and sense of community.

### *Ask*

Whether you need directions, advice on local activities, or help finding a babysitter, asking questions can be a great conversation starter. You’ll get much better information from a local than from a Google search, and it’s much more fun to chat with real people! Just remember to move beyond information seeking and ask questions to get to know the people you’re talking to- this is where the real treasure lies!

### *Be a friend*

The best way to find a friend is to be a friend. Be a good listener, invite, and look for opportunities to help others. Even when you’re new and may need more support than usual yourself, small acts of kindness can go a long way. Looking out for what you can give, rather than just what you need, is not only a nice thing to do, but it can start a positive ripple effect in your life, lead to friendships built on generosity and kindness, and help you feel happier.

### *Get connected locally*

Find out what local groups and clubs there are and attend a few gatherings. Local online groups can be valuable in getting to know local resources and information. See what events Meetup and other online groups have in your area. There are many expat groups that have local gatherings, where you may meet others who are also new to the area. If you can’t gather locally due to COVID, at least connect online with others in your area so that you are getting to know people that you can meet in person once the restrictions lift.

### *Initiate*

When you’re new somewhere, it’s not the time to be shy. If there’s someone you think you’d like to get to know better, be bold: introduce yourself and invite them to get together. You can always use the excuse that you recently moved there and you’re trying to get to know people. If you’re not sure where to meet or what to do, you could ask them to introduce you to some of their favorite places or activities locally.

“If you go looking for a friend, you’re going to find they’re very scarce.

If you go out to be a friend, you’ll find them everywhere.”

~ ZIG ZIGLAR