



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* ADELAIDE

# FRIENDSHIPS AT UNI

**Student Life - Counselling Support**

Making friends at university is high on the agenda for most students. You may have watched television shows or movies set at university where having big parties and hanging around with large groups of people is the norm. However, this is probably not the experience of the typical uni student. As humans we all have a desire to be around other people and connect with them in a meaningful way. Sometimes this is difficult to do at uni for a number of reasons. For example:

- You may be enrolled in a course such as Arts or Sciences where students are studying different subjects and rarely see each other.
- You may be from interstate or overseas and do not know many people in Adelaide.
- You may feel too nervous to approach new people.

### **Connecting with other students**

You may want to find friends like you had in high school, to find best mates to hang around with. What we can all forget is that your existing friendships have probably taken years to develop. So when we meet new people it is important to give the relationship time to grow. Some relationships may develop into really close friendships over the years at university while others will continue to just be acquaintances. While it is a bonus to develop really close friendships, having acquaintances can also be really useful to help you feel part of the university community.

You can connect with other people through a variety of avenues, such as:

- Sharing common acquaintances
- Being enrolled in the same degree
- Being part of the same uni clubs or associations
- Sharing accommodation

If you are finding it difficult to connect with other students, ask yourself the question,

*“What could I do to meet more people?”*

You could try:

- Joining a uni club or association
- Finding out about your faculty's social events
- Volunteering (e.g. approach Ask Adelaide or check [www.adelaide.edu.au/volunteer](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/volunteer))
- Attending morning teas at International Student Support (if you are an international student)
- Starting a hobby (e.g. art and craft, painting, book clubs, learning a new language, cooking classes)
- Joining a sporting club (e.g. walking group or a soccer, football or netball team)
- Talking with other students in your tutorial groups

### **Helpful hints to connect with others**

- Try to say, "Hi" to as many people as you can. If they say, "Hi" back, that's great. If you cross paths again, it is much easier to say, "Hi" a second, third and fourth time.
- If you can find anything in common to talk about, this can be a great starting point. Sometimes starting with any topic can allow you to explore other topics. If you are sitting in a tutorial room waiting for the tutor, why not ask how the other person is feeling about this subject or what they think of the assignments? Talking about the subject, for example, might lead to a discussion about what other subjects, or the degree they are studying. After having this type of conversation with someone, it will be much easier for you to talk with that person again, as you know more about them and they know more about you.
- If a tutor assigns a group project, you might like to suggest your group works together over a coffee instead of working on separate parts of the assignment alone.
- It is important to recognise that making and maintaining meaningful friendships also requires you to feel comfortable talking about yourself, your own experiences and interests. This

can be difficult for a variety of reasons. For example, sometimes students may feel what they have to say is not clever or funny enough. However, if people do not get to know you (e.g. what you like and dislike, what your goals are, etc.) it can be difficult to form long lasting, meaningful friendships.

- If you have had a couple of good conversations with someone, you could take the opportunity to ask them if they want to meet up for a coffee or lunch. If the other person says, "No", try not to let this lead automatically to negative thoughts and criticism about yourself. There may be another perfectly good reason for them declining your offer.
- If you tend to experience unwarranted or excessive anxiety in social situations, it may be helpful to seek help. Consider contacting Counselling Support on 08 8313 5663 to discuss this issue further.

## **REMEMBER**

- Not all of the people you talk with have to become your friends, but they are people you can chat to in a tutorial or if you see them around the university.
- When you are speaking with someone new, they probably feel just as nervous as you do.
- Practice is important. Most things are not easy or comfortable until we become rehearsed or experienced with them. Try to see meeting or talking with new people as a skill you can develop.
- Even if people already have other friends, most people are open to having more friends in their lives.

Counselling Support is available to assist students with personal difficulties that are affecting their study.

The service provides:

- Individual counselling by appointment
- Face to face, virtual and phone appointments
- Mental health emergency response

**Counselling Support**

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**Ph: +61 8 8313 5663**

**After hours support: 1300 167 654 or sms 0488 884 197**