Going for the Gold
To Make a Friend Be a Friend!

By Allan Weisbard L.C.S.W.

How to have a great conversation:

1. **Ask questions.** Ask about their interests and challenges. Show interest and take the conversation deeper without being intrusive.
2. **Listen and try not to judge.** It doesn't mean you agree with everything they say, it means you are taking the time to understand what their needs and aspirations are.
3. **Show interest with follow-up questions.** Such as, “How did you arrive at that?”
4. **Zip your lips.** Consciously ignore your ego’s desire to be in charge or right. When you correct someone they feel attacked and often become hostile or defensive.
5. **Stay focused.** Stop thinking about what you are going to say next.
6. **Don’t be too nosey.** Ask about what’s positive in their lives, then maybe about challenges. Don’t give unsolicited advice—especially regarding family.
7. **Don’t gossip.** If you do, they won’t be inclined to trust you. Be kind.
8. **Use open body language.** Be aware of personal space needs, which vary from person to person.
9. **Put away distractions.** Don’t check your cell phone during a conversation.
10. **Reflect on your conversation.** Afterwards ask yourself, “What went well?”

How to develop deeper relationships:

11. **Make time together a priority.** This means you have to schedule it.
12. **Be active together—go for coffee, exercise.** Friends don’t have to be alike in personality or life experiences, sharing activities creates common experiences.
13. **Be willing to try new things.**
14. **Understand friendships may be situational and temporary.** Life changes so try not to take rejection personally—it may have nothing to do with you.
15. **Be patient and don’t overdo it.** Be aware of cues from the other person that they need more space.
16. **Understand that many people are overwhelmed and busy.** This includes social media connections. People can’t be available 24/7.
17. **Have fun together.** Value your friends like the rare gems they are!

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