



Building your own tribe

You may have heard the expression that 'friends are the family we choose'.

Some people may be physically distanced from their families, which may have been made more difficult in recent years with travel restrictions across the globe. Others may have strained relationships with their families or not have biological family or a romantic partner. In these times, we turn to our friendships for support, social connection, and a sense of belonging.

Why are friendships important?

Studies have shown that once our basic livings needs have been met, our need for social interaction and support is top of the list of priorities for our health and wellbeing. Some benefits of close relationships include:

- 1 Improved sense of belonging, increased social interaction and decreased loneliness
- 2 Reduced stress, or better outlets to discuss and combat stressors
- 3 Ongoing personal development

"Anything is possible when you have the right people there to support you."

Misty Copeland









What does a healthy relationship look like?

Our relationships with others are slightly different which is what makes them interesting. However, at their core, healthy relationships share some common characteristics such as:

- 1 You respect, trust and can be vulnerable with each other
- 2 You can be open and honest with each other
- 3 You can depend and rely on each other to show up for the big and small moments
- 4 You are both kind, thoughtful and respect each other's boundaries
- 5 You challenge each other to grow and develop
- 6 You can be flexible – life changes and so do our friendships but flexibility allows our friendships to grow and change with us

How to build and maintain healthy relationships

Building and maintaining relationships takes time and energy, but it's not without its benefits. Try these tips to create lasting friendships in your life.

	<p>Focus on your common ground As a child, you can make a best friend based solely on the fact that you had the same sandwich filling at lunch! As an adult it's not always that simple however the premise remains the same – find some common ground from which to build your relationship.</p>		<p>Respect each other's boundaries We all have our own boundaries that need to be respected. While sharing personal information and spending time together are important ways to build a friendship, respect your friend's privacy and boundaries if they do not feel comfortable sharing the same amount of information as you.</p>
	<p>Allow yourself to be vulnerable To develop deeper and more meaningful relationships, we need to be open and vulnerable. By sharing more personal information, we allow others to get to know us on a deeper level and they feel comfortable doing the same.</p>		<p>Make time for each other All people and relationships go through seasons of change, including our friendships. Finding time can be difficult between our various commitments however prioritising social interactions is important for our overall wellbeing and nothing is as good as spending some quality time with your friends in person.</p>
	<p>Be supportive Support your friends through the exciting times in their life and be there to share in the positivity, but it's also important to show up for them in more difficult times and give them a helping hand if it's needed.</p>		<p>Be honest Sometimes supporting your friend can also mean challenging them. You don't always need to agree with them 100% and, in fact, if you disagree with them, it's important that you can be honest with them. Be respectful and explain your perspective so they can have an open discussion with you. At the same time, keep an open mind and be understanding of your friend's decision-making.</p>

Know when to reach out

Some things we can manage on our own, but there are some things we can't. Knowing the difference is another important skill.

If you do need someone to talk to, contact our mental health and wellbeing services, we're here to help.