NEWS LESSON

# When Did Seeing a Friend Need So Much Planning?



## BEFORE YOU READ

### 1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Where do adults get a chance to see the same people regularly?
2. What makes it easier to turn an acquaintance into a friend?
3. Would you rather meet one person for coffee or join a group?

### 2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **logistical** | ☐ | A | the ability to start something yourself |
| 2 | **mobility** | ☐ | B | a time of great difficulty or danger |
| 3 | **acquaintances** | ☐ | C | friendly and happy to meet new people |
| 4 | **evolve** | ☐ | D | the ability to move from place to place |
| 5 | **infrastructure** | ☐ | E | connected with organising the details of a plan |
| 6 | **outgoing** | ☐ | F | people you know a little but are not close to |
| 7 | **crisis** | ☐ | G | the basic systems that a society needs to work |
| 8 | **initiative** | ☐ | H | to change slowly over time |

## 3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

**School supplied repeated contact for free, while adulthood requires you to schedule it. WHO figures put loneliness highest among adolescents and young adults, which undercuts the story that the trouble begins at 30.**

1 Adult friendship has a logistical problem. Two people can care deeply about each other and still struggle to find an evening when neither is working, caring for relatives or travelling across a city. The difficulty is often described as a personal failure, yet work, travel and caring for other people can make meeting regularly difficult.

2 Friendship rarely appears out of nowhere. In education, repeated contact, shared experiences and available time quietly do much of the work that adults later have to arrange deliberately. The challenge may become visible in one's thirties, when professional commitments, parenting and geographical mobility reshape social networks. Unlike school or university, adult life rarely guarantees repeated contact with potential friends in relaxed circumstances. Relationships must be maintained deliberately, and every cancelled plan can make the next invitation feel slightly more awkward.

3 A 2025 World Health Organization report estimated that approximately one in six people worldwide experienced loneliness. Significantly, its figures indicated higher levels among adolescents and young adults than among older groups. The evidence therefore resists a simplistic narrative about loneliness being a problem that begins at 30; it is a broad social concern expressed differently across life stages.

4 The practical difficulties are easy to underestimate. A promising new friendship may need several invitations before either person feels comfortable, yet both may fear seeming too keen or intrusive.

5 It is also important to distinguish loneliness from social isolation. The former concerns the gap between desired and experienced connection; the latter describes an objective shortage of social contact. Someone with a small circle may feel supported, while another person with an apparently busy social life may lack anyone with whom they can be vulnerable.

6 Advice about joining clubs or arranging regular meetings can be helpful, but it only addresses part of the problem. Long working hours, expensive transport, inaccessible venues and caring responsibilities can limit opportunities for social life. Personal initiative matters, yet the design of communities also influences whether relationships have space to develop. The solution is not necessarily to become more outgoing. Making room for regular contact, accepting occasional awkwardness and following up after a good conversation may matter more than charm.

7 Digital communication complicates the distinction between connection and companionship. Technology makes it easier to maintain relationships across borders and demanding schedules, yet frequent contact is not identical to emotional support. A person may exchange daily messages with dozens of acquaintances while lacking somebody to turn to during a crisis. Conversely, infrequent but reliable contact with a longstanding friend can remain deeply meaningful.

8 Friendships also evolve as people's circumstances change, and contact that tails off does not always indicate rejection or failure. The challenge is to create opportunities for reciprocal relationships rather than simply accumulating interactions. Public institutions, employers and community organisations may all influence whether adults can find the time and space to build that kind of connection.

9 Perhaps friendship deserves to be understood as essential social infrastructure rather than something squeezed into the gaps around paid work and family duties. The goal is not endless networking or an impressive number of contacts. It is the slower, less glamorous task of building relationships in which people feel known and supported.

Sources: World Health Organization. Picture: AI illustration.

## 4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer suggests that a person with few friends could feel better supported than someone with a full diary. T F NG
2. The writer says that infrequent contact with an old friend is of little value. T F NG
3. The writer believes employers should give staff paid time off for socialising. T F NG
4. The writer says daily messages with many acquaintances are as good as having one person to rely on in a crisis. T F NG
5. The writer implies that failing to find time to meet is rarely a sign that two people do not care about each other. T F NG

## 5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

**accumulating** **deliberately** **intrusive** **longstanding** **reclusive** **simplistic** **transient** **vulnerable**

1. Blaming loneliness on a single cause is a _____ explanation that ignores the evidence.
2. She hesitated to phone so often, worried that her constant calls might seem _____ .
3. Adults often have to arrange meetings _____ , because contact no longer happens by chance.
4. After a _____ friendship of thirty years, a few silent months did not worry her.
5. Her approach to networking involved _____ contacts rather than building trust.
6. Few people are willing to be _____ with someone they have only just met.

## 6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Friendship needs _____ if it is to survive busy schedules. (COMMIT)
2. The report's findings were _____ for many readers who assumed loneliness mainly affects older people. (SURPRISE)
3. Her _____ to reply made him wonder whether he had offended her. (RELUCTANT)
4. Greater _____ at work would give people more time for friends. (FLEXIBLE)
5. The evidence _____ the argument that loneliness is not limited to one age group. (STRONG)

## 7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Look for the partner that a native speaker would expect. Adverbs, adjectives and verbs all have favourite partners, so try each word in the gap and listen to it.

| build | deeply | demanding | drift | lightly | professional | reshape |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Two people can care _____ about each other and still lose touch.
2. Long hours and _____ commitments leave little room for friends.
3. Many adults fit friends around a _____ schedule.
4. A move abroad can _____ a person's daily routine and social habits.
5. Over the years, they managed to _____ a bond of real trust.

SPEAK

## 8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would make someone feel welcome after arriving in a new city?
2. Can a regular small plan do more for friendship than a big occasional one?
3. Which matters more for staying friends: shared interests or making time?

## 9 Role-play: finding time for a friend

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

**Student A · the busy friend**

You work long hours and you're tired at the weekend. You'd like to stay friends, but you don't want a big plan. Suggest a short coffee or a video call. Say what you can and cannot do.

**Student B · the friend who misses you**

You haven't seen your friend for three months. Messages are not enough for you. Ask to meet face to face, for a walk or a meal. Try to agree a date before you finish.

**Useful phrases**

How about we meet on Saturday?
I'd love to, but I'm busy that day.
Let's make a plan before we say goodbye.
I don't want us to drift apart.
That works for me.
Could we meet halfway?

**Afterwards, tell the class: what plan did you agree, and was it fair to both of you?**

ANSWER KEY

**2 Key words**

1 E · 2 D · 3 F · 4 H · 5 G · 6 C · 7 B · 8 A

**4 True, false or not given**

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 T

**5 Vocabulary**

1 simplistic · 2 intrusive · 3 deliberately · 4 longstanding · 5 accumulating · 6 vulnerable

**6 Word forms**

1 commitment · 2 surprising · 3 reluctance · 4 flexibility · 5 strengthens

**7 Language focus**

1 deeply · 2 professional · 3 demanding · 4 reshape · 5 build

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