NEWS LESSON

Why Making Friends Takes More 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	**adolescents**	☐	A	a close link between people
2	**isolation**	☐	B	young people who are no longer children but not yet adults
3	**reciprocity**	☐	C	the state of being alone and far from other people
4	**accessible**	☐	D	when two people give and get the same kind of help
5	**predictable**	☐	E	easy to reach or to use
6	**diverge**	☐	F	the size of something
7	**bond**	☐	G	easy to know before it happens
8	**scale**	☐	H	to start to go in different ways

3 Read

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

The World Health Organization's 2025 report put the figure at one in six, with adolescents and younger adults reporting it most. Adult friendship has to be arranged rather than assumed.

1 At school or university, friendships often develop almost automatically. People spend time together every day, share experiences and gradually become close. In adult life, those opportunities are less predictable. A friendship that once involved spontaneous evenings out may now depend on finding a date that suits several crowded calendars.

2 The problem can become especially noticeable after 30, when careers, children, relationships and house moves reshape daily routines. Meeting new people requires effort, while maintaining existing friendships can feel like another responsibility. Yet the pressure is not unique to middle age.

3 The World Health Organization's 2025 report on social connection estimated that one in six people worldwide experienced loneliness. Its figures suggested that loneliness was particularly common among adolescents and younger adults, challenging the stereotype that loneliness mainly affects older people. Those global estimates cannot explain every individual's friendships, but they show the scale of the issue.

4 Loneliness and social isolation are different. Somebody might have only a few social contacts and feel perfectly content, while another person could be surrounded by colleagues and still miss close emotional relationships. Quality matters as well as quantity. In adult life, regular contact has to be arranged. A friendly conversation at work is not always enough; someone usually has to take the next step and suggest meeting again.

5 Friendships tend to develop through repeated contact, shared interests and trust. Adult routines often provide fewer natural opportunities for those ingredients. Community groups, classes and volunteering can help, although joining an activity does not guarantee a close friendship. People also need time, accessible spaces and the confidence to suggest meeting again.

6 Technology has changed the practical side of friendship. Voice messages and video calls allow relationships to survive international moves, irregular work schedules and long periods without meeting. Yet these tools do not automatically provide the emotional support people need. The number of contacts in an app tells us little about whether somebody has anyone to fall back on during a difficult week.

7 Relationships also change without necessarily ending badly. Two friends may drift apart as their circumstances diverge, while new friendships can spring up through shared interests much later in life. Recognising this may reduce some of the pressure surrounding adult social networks. Not every friendship needs to remain equally intense forever, but meaningful connection usually requires attention, reciprocity and opportunities to spend time together.

8 Perhaps we should stop treating adult friendship as an optional extra. Relationships require attention in much the same way that careers and physical health do. A brief message or regular coffee can help maintain a bond, but creating communities where people have time to connect may be just as important.

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. According to the report, loneliness is not mainly a problem for older people. T F NG
2. The writer says one friendly conversation at work is always enough to make a friend. T F NG
3. Most adults in their thirties say they have fewer friends than they had at university. T F NG
4. The writer suggests that a person with many contacts in an app may still have nobody to rely on. T F NG
5. The writer says that friendships which fade have ended badly. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

circumstances	intense	isolated	optional	scale	spontaneous	stereotype	survive

1. We went on a _____ trip to the coast, decided on the same morning.
2. The _____ that only older people feel lonely is not supported by the figures.
3. Their _____ changed after she lost her job, and she had less time for friends.
4. After the argument, their conversations became very _____ and emotional.
5. Their friendship managed to _____ five years of living in different countries.
6. Joining the club was _____ , so nobody had to come if they did not want to.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time I was thirty, most of my friends _____ to other cities. (MOVE)
2. Last year, the walking club _____ by a group of volunteers. (ORGANISE)
3. You _____ her a message; she is probably waiting to hear from you. (SHOULD / SEND)
4. If we had lived closer, we _____ each other more often. (SEE)
5. He _____ meeting again, but nobody answered his message. (SUGGEST)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Verbs and nouns often come as fixed pairs. Check which verb sounds natural with the noun, as in a common phrase you already know.

hold	maintain	pay	put	share	support	take

1. At school, people _____ experiences and gradually become close.
2. It is hard to _____ regular contact with friends when you work night shifts.
3. A good listener can offer real emotional _____ during a difficult week.
4. Friendships fade if you do not _____ attention to them.
5. A busy job can _____ pressure on friendships.

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 spontaneous · 2 stereotype · 3 circumstances · 4 intense · 5 survive · 6 optional

6 Verb forms

1 had moved · 2 was organised · 3 should send · 4 would have seen · 5 suggested

7 Language focus

1 share · 2 maintain · 3 support · 4 pay · 5 put

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