

**Notes from 2/28/24 and 3/6/24**  
**ADHD and Friendship**

**What do we as ADHDers offer as friends? 😊**

Accepting and Inclusive  
Creativity  
Empathy  
Energy  
Engaging conversations  
Enthusiasm  
Exciting and fun  
Humor  
Loyalty  
Spontaneity  
Trusting  
Quick thinking  
Unique perspectives

**What does having friends offer us? 😊**

Accountability  
A place where we can be ourselves  
A sense of acceptance and belonging  
Challenge our perspectives, expand our worldview  
Community  
Connection  
Courage  
Creation of healthy, positive memories  
Discovery of new interests  
Emotional regulation – someone to check in with to see how they see/feel the situation, etc.  
Essential to well-being of all humans – naturally social, communal creatures  
Exploration of shared interests  
Laughter  
Life enhancing  
Partner to do difficult things, try adventurous things, travel  
Reassurance  
Sounding board  
Support – real world, real time; from rides to raising money

*Mention: Types of friendships → Dr. Sharon Saline (2023) Intimates, Best Buddies, Pals, Acquaintances, Strangers*  
*She wrote What Your ADHD Child Wishes You Knew*

## **Key comments about what type of friend is what type of friend**

The difficulty of moving through those bands – may feel like we've connected more deeply quickly and be incorrect; struggle to identify who goes in what "band."

Who to call when need someone?

Friends who stick and are okay with it falling away and coming back together; others who "give up."

Relationship as negotiation.

Struggle to let go of friendships because life stage changes – friendship isn't balanced. Trying too much be a part of their lives and they pull back. Others who are looking for me and not able to carve out time/space for them. Geography, partner/marriage changes, children, etc.

## **What ADHD traits/behaviors and/or associated experiences interfere with our ability to make or keep friends?**

Apologizing "all the time" and accepting the blame too quickly for "everything"

Being "too much," "too energetic" or going "all in"

Blunt/Directness/Abrasive

Boredom (needing a break from friends, appearing inconsistent, unreliable)

Chameleon

Disliking large gatherings (overwhelm, attention concerns, preferring to be one on one or in small groups)

Emotional dysregulation

Endings – ADHDers don't typically like endings so we hang on to friends even if not healthy

Fear: of rejection, of being taken advantage of, of loss, of being embarrassed, of disappointing them or them disappointing me

Hyperactivity aka fidgeting

Impulsiveness (creating/canceling plans at last minute; bluntness/speaking before thinking/sending emails or texts before thinking/overing unsolicited advice)

Inability to sustain focus during interactions

Inflexibility (cognitive as executive function)

Impulsivity (cutting off friendships when hurt or disappointed; jumping deeply into friendship without getting to really know them first)

Interrupting (impulsiveness) and fast talking as aggressiveness

Lack of engagement perceived as shyness, aloofness

Low self-esteem/negative self-image/negative narratives

Masking

Moodiness

Over-sharing

Over-thinking

Overwhelm (see struggle below; and being overwhelmed by the other person(s) schedules, challenges, etc)  
Out of sight out of mind  
Physical clumsiness  
Previous exclusion or harassment  
Previous experiences having been bullied or teased  
Previous trauma  
Rejection sensitivity dysphoria  
Shame and guilt  
Social anxiety  
Social chameleon  
Struggle to manage the day to day (overwhelm)  
Symptoms of associated depression  
Time blindness (how has it been since you last spoke to \_\_\_\_\_?)  
Unintentionally or intentionally stealing the spotlight when in a group (“holding court”)  
Working memory and other memory impacts (birthdays, things that matter to them)

### **Whether we are neuro-spicy or neuro-boring....**

**What can we do/learn that would support our ability to get to know new friends and keep our longer-term friends?**

*Listen to what is being said rather than thoughts in head (ready with next statement or response; not anticipate)*

*Want to hear the person, be interested in that person*

*Avoid putting self down internally in order to be more present and less uptight – I’m okay*

*Refrain from oversharing*

*Letting go the shame of not having a large number of friends*

*Refrain from “giving too much” and learn to rebalance the scales – how to do this? Is this impulsivity?*

*Consider how we choose friends – proximity = need something from me? As an antidote to loneliness rather than fulfilling through relationship*

*Process the discomfort when letting friends go who may not have been the friends we thought they were*

*Getting out of my own head – “don’t know how to make people feel good” – what do I want from other people? What feeling are we looking for? Thinking doing things, rather than “being” – what do people want from me?*

*How to be open and model the behavior we want from others*

*Getting along better with those who are younger than us*

*Understanding what isn’t said, what’s between the lines*

*People-pleasing creates opening, the next step is the harder part – where’s the manual?*

*Recognizing that some of our actual friends are actually undiagnosed ADHDers who may not be capable of showing up for us in the moment*

*Emphasis on quality not quantity*

*Boundaries – asking questions, being curious – when does this bump into others’ boundaries?*

*Give ourselves permission to go to events alone and say hello to someone there  
What do you like about yourself and “going with those”*

**Other ideas from attendees:**

- *What can we learn from sales techniques?*
- *What can we learn from books like *The Lonely Hearts Book Club*, *Group*, *Atlas of the Heart*, Carolyn McGuire’s book, ?*
- *What can we learn from being in groups that share common interests and have built in opportunities for connecting one on one, like peer mentoring or activity-based groups?*

**Ask relevant questions**

**AVOID MINDREADING from expressions, silence**

Ask yourself when friends are unavailable what’s behind your taking it personally

Assess what’s happening on people’s faces

**Avoid or limit oversharing**

**Avoid self-criticism and self-deprecation**

Be aware of physical proximity

Be aware of volume of voice – mirror, mimic

**Be mindful of interrupting. Combat the urge – take a sip, make a note, breathe deeply and be curious**

**Become aware of your current listening skills and practice to improve them.**

Calendar the next interaction at the end of the current interaction.

Consider communicating relevant bits of information about ADHD

Determine which friendships mean the most and actively engage in them. (aka prioritize)

Explore ways to manage memory issues: writing down names of new people, preparing beforehand, make notes about your friends, subscribe to service that handles sending birthday cards and such

Learn to read social cues

**Look for people who would make good friends for you**

**Look for connections**

Manage expectations

Manage follow through on commitments – put it on the calendar, set an alert, etc

Monitor yourself and develop an understanding of behaviors/traits that may be harming friendships.

Own mistakes. Apologize for interrupting, forgetting, being late without excuses.

**Practice all the things**

**Practice communication skills**

Repeat (reflect) things back just as you heard them to make sure you understood and help “seal the memory.” Return to listening mode.

Say thank you when complimented

**Self-care: acceptance, sleep, nutrition, movement, take your meds; being curious about self and forgiving of former self**

**Self-awareness – what do we want out of friendship, what else might be true in a situation**

Set and maintain boundaries

Set goals like engaging in one brief exchange with an acquaintance or a stranger (safely).

Stay on topic.

Tell friends how much you care and acknowledge what they do for you, mean to you.

## RESOURCES

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