



Wisconsin Gossellers

Dec 2019 Newsletter

11 Ways to Turn Strangers into Friends

By Matt Ramos

“Fear makes strangers of people who would be friends.” ~Shirley Maclaine

Up until a year ago, I saw the world as a place where very few doors opened for me. At first I thought it was due to being extremely introverted. But as time went on, I started to struggle with [making friends](#). I didn't have many of them—and opportunities only knocked a few times a year. That's when I realized my problems stemmed from my passivity and fear of actually going out and talking to people.

My few closest friends always told me to join a club or go to parties. People always told me where to meet people. But they never really showed me how to actually create conversation. On top of that, I never really liked going to big social gatherings. I'm introverted and tend to be overwhelmed when a lot of people are around. I like talking one-on-one. So I decided to do things my own way. I started talking to strangers on my college campus and in the city because I was tired of staying on the sidelines. It was scary for a naturally timid person like me, but I decided to fight the fear.

Great things come to those who are willing to risk rejection and put themselves out there.

After two months of doing this, I made some great friends, simply by starting conversations.

It's an empowering mindset to be able to create conversation with potentially anyone. There is always the choice to talk to whom I want to talk to.

I asked people what drink they bought from the coffee shop. I asked someone about her customized bike. I asked people to share opinions on things that affected me. Some people opened up to me. Some people stayed shut down. Some of them continued talking about themselves when I put the spotlight on them. Others simply answered my question and left the conversation there. All of these interactions allowed me to understand how to engage with people. For example, I learned that tone and body language are more important than saying the right thing.

Through my experiences, I learned that people are usually friendly and happy to talk to you.

I've been able to meet more people than I ever expected just by opening up to them. That's when I learned that it was up to me to be proactive and create my own doors instead of complaining that none were opening for me. It was up to me to [create my own opportunities](#) by connecting with people.

Besides feeling more connected, I feel happier knowing that I have the power to talk to whomever I want to. More opportunities arrived by networking with others. For example, I was able to pursue photography with a new friend simply because I reached out and asked.

Matt Ramos is a college student who wants to make the world a better place. You can read his blog at theapproachmachine.com. He writes about rejection, breaking social barriers, and altruism as a means of overcoming his struggle with social anxiety while making the world less boring.



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The first five tips for turning strangers into friends (by Matt Ramos):

1. Say the magic word: “Hi.”

It sounds so obvious, but it's the first big barrier. You have to be willing to put yourself out there to start a conversation.

I noticed that people are welcoming after you break the ice. It's not something that everyone wants to do because it takes some courage to go up to someone you've never met before and start a conversation. However, more people are welcoming than we generally expect. When you encounter someone who isn't, remember that someone else will be.

2. Detach yourself from the outcome.

When you [don't expect](#) any outcome, you won't be disappointed or offended if someone doesn't respond to you.

There's a difference between perceived outcome and what actually happens. How many times have you worried about a worst- case situation only to find out that it turned out much better than you anticipated?

If I don't expect any outcome from whatever I'm doing, then I can be in the present moment and adjust accordingly.

3. Tolerate rejection.

If they reject you, it isn't about you. It's about where they are at mentally, so don't take it personally. If they passed up on the opportunity to connect with you, then they missed out on something great.

4. Don't mind what strangers think.

This is your life, and you have the right to talk to whomever you want to talk to. Not everyone is that open. Allow them to be how they are and think how they do, without letting it challenge your courage.

5. If you feel the fear, do it anyway.

One of the best ways to [combat the fear](#) is to do it repeatedly. Push through the fear and it will start to feel more natural.

The fear may never fully subside, but if you continue to battle through it, the momentum you create will be more powerful than the remaining fear. For example, when I feel terrified of approaching someone, I think back to a calming moment or a moment that made me laugh. Then, the fear didn't feel so daunting anymore.



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The last six tips for turning strangers into friends (by Matt Ramos):

6. Practice.

Don't worry if you seem a little awkward or aggressive at first. If your intentions are authentic, you will come across that way more and more each time you try. It's just like any other skill where it gets easier with practice. A few of my first conversations with strangers felt scary and awkward, but they didn't do any harm. It made me learn what I needed to work on.

7. Make it about them.

Talk about their interests, opinions, and ideas. Then respond to what they share. The best way to keep someone interested in a conversation is to show an interest in their life. Everyone likes to talk about themselves. Even if you don't know a lot about a particular subject, keep asking questions to understand them.

8. Make them laugh.

Laughter makes the conversation fun and joyful. People enjoy talking with others who make them laugh. So get out of your head and don't take anything too seriously—just have fun with it!

9. Try to discover their core passion.

If you see their eyes light up when they talk about something, ask more questions about that. If you find a keyword that helps you figure out their interest, try to talk about that. For example, if I asked "How's the weather?" They say, "It's nice that it's foggy since. It's better to run in it." Then you can go ahead and talk about running.

10. Go out and smile!

Smiling gives a good first impression. Practice in the mirror. Then smile to the world. I noticed that people relaxed themselves when I smiled first. When I continued smiling throughout the conversation, they smiled back and really opened themselves up to deeper conversation.

11. Imagine that the other person is already your friend.

This way you'll treat them that way instead of seeming awkward—and being comfortable around someone is the best way to start a new friendship.

Take a chance today and talk to someone new. When you're friendly to someone, they'll most often be friendly back.



Mission Statement: To bridge cultural divides and touch souls through the transformative power of gospel music

Vision Statement: A world where God's love triumphs over that which divides us.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Lunch by</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Sat Jan 11th 2020	10am-3pm 3pm concert	Cedar Ridge 113 Cedar Ridge Dr West Bend WI 53095	Cedar Ridge	Rehearsal/ workshop & Concert
Sat Feb 8th 2020	10am-3pm	First Congregational UCC 311 2nd St S, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494	sopranos	Rehearsal
Sat Mar 14th 2020	10am-3pm	Congregational UCC 1511 Nicolet Blvd, Neenah, WI 54956	altos	Rehearsal
Sat Apr 11th 2020	10am-3pm	Olivet Congregational UCC 313 W Prairie St, Columbus, WI 53925	Tenor & Basses	Rehearsal
Sat May 9 2020	10am-3pm	First Congregational UCC 311 2nd St S, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494	sopranos	Rehearsal
Tentatively Jun 29-Jul 7 2020	Gospel & More Choir from Germany visits	Various churches throughout wisconsin	n/a	Rehearsal & concerts & touring

? = still tentative and could change. Stay tuned! Will be updated at a later date or via email.

Music-based assignment for the month

Work on memorizing the song "Fill-a-me Up".

Mission-based assignment for the month

Turn a stranger into a friend by using some of the tips outlined in the article in this newsletter.