

The Art of Social Networking



**How to meet people, make friends
and improve your dating life
without going to bars and clubs**

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Introduction

How I learned to love social networking

A few years ago, I experienced the devastating effects of the break-up of my marriage. It was difficult on many levels, but one of the hardest things that I had to confront was being alone and having to rebuild a network of friends.

Being in a relationship with the same person for 12 years means you share a lot of common friends and you start to take your social life for granted. As you focus more energy towards your partner in a relationship, you slowly start to close yourself off to the outside world and you start limiting your opportunities to meet new people.

Anyone who has ever experienced the break-up of a relationship knows that it usually also means losing a lot of friends that you either shared with your partner, or knew through your partner. This was exactly what happened to me.

This is especially difficult when those friends you do manage to keep are in serious relationships or have children because they hardly go out anymore. It's even worse if you are working full time and are no longer in a life situation where it is easy to meet people, like being in college. Eventually, you start losing the important life skill of making new friends and your social network starts to shrink.

I was faced with the daunting task of either rebuilding my social life and start dating again, or else be faced with a life of solitude. Neither option was particularly appetizing at first. I had forgotten how to date and how to make new friends.

But once I learned the principles of social networking that I will share with you, my social life exploded! Not only did I start enjoying meeting new people, I got so good at it, that within a few months, I was able to host a party for over 150 of my new friends.

The science of social networking

There is an art and science to social networking. Being married, being in a long-term relationship, or always hanging out with the same group of friends creates “closed” social networks. These are networks of people who usually only hang out together and have limited opportunities to meet new people.

In contrast, more "open" networks with many social connections to new people outside your group and with contacts in other networks offer you connections to people who can expand your social group, infuse the group with fresh ideas and provide opportunities for more variety. As well, these more open networks offer you access to a more varied array of potential friends.

In other words, a group of friends who only do things with each other already share the same friends, knowledge and experiences and have limited opportunities to grow as people. A group of friends with connections to other social networks is likely to have access to a wider range of information, opportunities and potential new friends.

As it turns out, it is better for our health and individual success to have connections to a variety of networks rather than only stay within a single network. There is a growing body of evidence in psychology that suggests that the more friends a person has, the more fulfilled and successful they are likely to be.

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Years ago, I was a senior Naval Officer - a Lt-Commander - in the Canadian Navy. At that time, I noticed that when we were in crisis situations, some of my sailors would crack under the pressure and fall apart, whereas others would shine and become natural leaders. I was intrigued because they had all received the same training but reacted wildly differently under pressure. Those that couldn't handle the pressure stayed in mediocre jobs while those who shone under pressure quickly got promoted to higher ranks and more important responsibilities. I was one of those who got promoted quickly.

While I was conducting my doctoral research to obtain my PhD, I went back to this question to find out why people crack under pressure. I started a massive research project with the Canadian Army to look at why some soldiers fall apart while others shine under pressure. I surveyed close to 1,000 soldiers and gathered enormous amounts of information about them, including: what kind of parents they had, what kind of friends they had back home and in the Army, what their personalities were like, how much other people liked them, how they performed under pressure, how they cope with different stresses in their lives, even how many hours they slept etc., etc., etc.. I had gathered so much information in fact, that you could say that I knew these soldiers better than they knew themselves.

What I found was that a soldier's ability to make new friends in the Army and the number of friends in their social network could predict whether they would pass or fail boot-camp and whether or not they would be susceptible to developing psychological problems. In fact, the number and quality of friends a soldier had in their network would predict who would crack under pressure better than their skills or personality style by a factor of 10! This means that the social network a soldier had built was 10 times more important in predicting whether they would pass boot-camp or crack under pressure than their own skills and efforts. Soldiers with more friends would end up performing better in their training, report less symptoms of illness, and were generally happier and less depressed.

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One interesting discovery was that I could predict which soldiers would pass or fail their training by looking at what kind of friends they had BEFORE they even joined the Army. Even though they didn't see their friends back home anymore, it appeared that certain soldiers had developed an ability to make high quality friends anywhere they went. And they would transpose that skill to create new, high quality social networks when they joined the Army. Soldiers who had low quality friendships back home (low levels of support and high levels of conflict within their friendships) were also likely to have low quality friendships in the Army and were more likely to fail boot-camp. Soldiers who had good quality friends back home (high levels of support and low levels of conflict) also made high quality friends in the Army and were more likely to pass boot-camp.

So it wasn't just a question of *having* friends that was important (although soldiers in bigger social groups performed better), it was also the ability to make new, high quality friends that was most important. It turns out that this ability to make high quality friends is something that a person carries around with them no matter where they are. And most importantly for my research, it is precisely this ability to make new, high quality friends in any situation that would predict whether someone would crack under pressure or not.

My own research is just one example of a growing body of evidence in psychology of the importance of friendships and social networks for people's happiness and overall success. It is part of a growing field of study called Resilience which is the science of bouncing back from adversity. Friendships and social networks have been shown to be directly related to resilience and promote social competence, self-esteem, and overall wellbeing as well as protecting people from the effects of stress at all stages of life. Here is just a brief overview of the research on social networks.

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Social networks are essential to our health and wellbeing as we are growing up during childhood and adolescence. Researchers have shown that having close friends and being embedded in a large social network protects children and adolescents from being victimized by bullies. Later on, these same skills are just as important as it has been shown that college freshmen who were able to create positive social networks with their new classmates were happier and psychologically healthier during their first year.

Parenthood is a major life transition and a major stressor, especially for teen mothers. In a study of pregnant teenagers, researchers showed that social support from high quality social networks during pregnancy contributed to lower rates of depression in the mothers, and healthier babies (noted by higher birth weights), beyond the social support offered by parents and family.

During the transition to adulthood, adolescents emerging from the child welfare system (foster and group care homes) had more chances of succeeding in life if they had an identifiable social support network and had developed the skills to make new, high quality friends.

In a review of over 2,500 studies of trauma, positive social networks were shown to prevent the development of Post-traumatic stress disorder and improve the recovery for those patients who did develop symptoms following traumatic life events.

Finally, in other studies, positive social networks have been shown to improve quality of life for patients with illnesses such as: depression; tuberculosis; breast cancer; and preventing depression and loneliness in seniors who were grieving the loss of a spouse. Positive social networks have also been shown to attenuate the emotional impact of: parenting stress, natural disasters and divorce.

It is important to point out that there are 3 important aspects of social networks that have to be considered: 1) Having a social network that

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you feel you are an active part of; 2) The size of the social network and; 3) The quality of the network (how supportive and conflict free your relationships are with the people in your network). Taken together, when these 3 aspects are considered, your social network can potentially contribute to your success and wellbeing more than your personal skills and efforts. The research is clear that social networks can help us be happier and more successful in life, provided they are with the right people and large enough to help us grow.

Where do I meet people?

So where do you start? Often times, when people want to make new friends in order to improve their dating lives (either because they are re-entering the dating scene after a long hiatus or because they just want to have more choice in who they date) the first question they ask is “Where do I meet people?”.



As you will discover, the answer is: EVERYWHERE! And the best thing about social networking is that you don't even have to go out to bars and clubs to do it. Bars and clubs are fine, but they are not natural environments in which to meet people. Most people meet their mates through mutual friends. Even people who do go to bars or

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clubs are usually there with people they already know and are out to have fun with existing friends rather than to meet new friends.

The idea of having to go out to bars and clubs is off-putting and overwhelming to many people. So much so, in fact, that you will start to find excuses NOT to go out just to avoid entering that terrifying world: walking up to a complete stranger, having to come up with some witty opening line, and risk the heart wrenching possibility of rejection.

We don't want what we think we can't get

We will go so far to avoid being rejected, that sometimes we will even make up excuses like: “I don't have time to go out”, “I can't be bothered to meet new people now”, “I don't want to be in another relationship right now” or “I enjoy my freedom and my ME time”. While these statements may sometimes be true, they are more often than not, just excuses. We often lie to ourselves in order to avoid something we are either afraid of or think we cannot do. **We try to convince ourselves that we don't want what we think we can't get.**

The scariest part of meeting a complete stranger in a club or bar is the first few seconds you meet them: the icebreaker. When you are meeting people through social networking, you don't need an icebreaker because you are not really strangers, you are friends of mutual friends and there is already a level of comfort you can't get from perfect strangers.

Meeting new people doesn't have to be a scary ordeal, and it certainly doesn't just happen in bars or clubs. It happens everywhere, all the time. It is a basic life skill that will enhance EVERY part of your life: personal, social, romantic and professional.

Improving your dating life

I strongly believe that for most people, **the quickest and easiest way to start improving your dating life is to start making new friends and increasing your social network.**

Let's just be friends

Everyone who has ever heard the dreaded words “Let’s just be friends” knows the horrible feeling of rejection and defectiveness we all feel when someone we like doesn’t like us back ‘in that way’. But in this book, I will teach you why these 4 words could be the happiest words you will ever hear.

If you date someone, you can never again stay friends with their social circle if things don’t work out. But when someone tells you that they just want to be friends, take them up on the offer and hold them to it! Friends introduce each other to single friends. Friends help friends get dates. And friends are great for social networking. Being friends with someone opens up a world of social possibilities that dating them closes off.

10 Essential Principles Of Social Networking

In this book, I will share with you the 10 principles of social networking that I've developed over the years and that have allowed me to rebuild my social life and experience the joys of being the center of a very large and ever expanding network of great people. I never have to ask "where do I meet people?"

10 Essential Principles of Social Networking

1. Be a renaissance person
2. Be your best so you can attract the best
3. Start with a purpose in mind
4. Be a social "NEXUS"
5. Be a 'YES-Man'
6. Be a great conversationalist
7. Connect
8. Follow-up
9. Consolidate
10. Reciprocate