

# 21 simple ways ... To Make Meaningful Connections



The need to belong—to feel that you have people to turn to—is so basic and so critical to mental and physical health that some scientists put it right up there with thirst and hunger. And just as we drink to quench our thirst or eat to soothe a growling stomach, we also can stave off social isolation. Here are 21 ways to forge vital connections in everyday life.

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- 1. Life is a social supermarket.** Sample something from every aisle. Life would be dull if we never tried anything new.
- 2. Value all your relationships.** To thrive, we need “consequential strangers” -- these are your coworkers, neighbors, and gym buddies.
- 3. Variety is the spice of living.** Interacting with a variety of people boosts your immune system and increases your chances of success.
- 4. Don't worry about being a “good connector”.** Some of us are better conversationalists than others. But the social supermarket is open to all of us!
- 5. Try new selves.** With consequential strangers we can stretch ourselves and move beyond familiar roles.
- 6. Become aware of your “social convoy”.** Look at the consequential strangers you've met in life, and you'll begin to see your past and present with new eyes.
- 7. Customize your connections.** Regularly recruit new convoy members who have the expertise, experience, or empathy we need for certain situations.
- 8. Turn to an objective observer.** It's often easier to reveal our anxieties to people we know less well.
- 9. Keep developing your social muscle.** With practice, connecting becomes second nature.
- 10. Make the most of phone connections.** Remember that the voice at the other end is coming from a real person. Make positive connections.
- 11. Find places that encourage easy connection.** Find welcoming environments where you can choose to make small, friendly gestures.

- 12. Give a stranger a moment's thought.** Be nice. Smile, nod, say hello.
- 13. Use the Internet.** Millions have found their way to Internet communities and social networking sites.
- 14. Set your intention.** If you are clear about the kind of connections you want to make, you're more likely to make them.
- 15. Collaborate across boundaries.** If you want to be more creative and productive, connect with someone who has a completely different background.
- 16. Consequential strangers can inspire us.** Strangers come from different worlds, introduce us to new ideas and bring a fresh perspective to the table.
- 17. Seek common ground.** Finding even a small patch of common ground can help you transcend differences and deepen relationships.
- 18. Make a connection with someone older or younger.** An acquaintance of a different generation can provide a window into another phase of life.
- 19. Contribute to your community.** Make a social “investment,” by committing to a project or interest.
- 20. Give yourself permission not to connect.** There will be times when we just need to be with familiar faces.

- 21. Even unpleasant connections teach us.** Changing your attitude can often transform a bad relationship into one that is at least bearable, if not better.

*These tips were inspired and provided by Melinda Blau from her most recent book, "Consequential Strangers: The Power of People Who Don't Seem to Matter...But Really Do."*