

For Friendship, Try This:

A WISE INDIVIDUAL once put it like this: "If you want friends, show yourself friendly." OK, how? Well, test this list.

■ *Make time.* As good a place to begin as any. Time only for yourself? You spend your time alone. Above all else, perhaps, friendship takes time.

■ *Don't be too selective.* There is a place, of course, to be quite picky. There is no point in letting people pull you down. If you can find no common ground of beliefs and values, friendship will be a struggle. On the other hand, don't be too hemmed in by differences. Race, social groups, even religion too often become barriers to understanding. It is enriching and constructive to have friendships that cut across such uncrossable boundaries.

■ *Look out for the lonely.* Even if they don't at first glance appear lonely. Into this category most of us drift. In. And then out. Others pitch a permanent tent in loneliness territory. We ought to make time for those people who are too often ignored by others.

■ *Bring out the best in people.* The best. And not the worst. This goes beyond being positive. The idea is a challenge: Leave people better than you find them. Encourage goodness, truth, kindness. Don't nurture badness; feed goodness.

■ *Anticipate concerns.* Ask yourself, "What's going on with this person? What are her needs? His concerns?" Don't be obnoxious, but go out of your way to help before a friend has to scream, "Somebody help me, please!"

■ *Don't be paranoid.* With any friendship there are times of tension. But shun the notion that the whole planet's out to getcha. Or that your friend doesn't like you anymore. There's a time to relax. And it's most of the time.

■ *If friendship doesn't click...* Let's face simple facts: Out of some raw material nothing can be manufactured. There are times when no amount of social gymnastics will develop friendship. Some people you will not click with. Or you will with them but they won't with you. Maybe you can't be a friend to them. But determine now that at least, at least, you will not be an enemy. Many friends and no enemies is still a good target. Take aim. —J.