

# CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter of the Counselling Unit

SUNWAY  
UNIVERSITY



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# LET'S HEAR IT FOR FRIENDSHIP!



*'The most beautiful discovery true friends make is that they can grow separately without growing apart.'*

*- Elizabeth Foley*

Friendship is an important part for every individual's survival in this world. As much as a good friend can be a positive influence and an important aspect of our growth and happiness, sometimes we get caught up with friends who may end up being more destructive for us and instead curb our development and sense of happiness. The question then remains - how do we ensure that the friendships we have in our lives are healthy ones and how do we continue building and maintaining healthy friendships?

We hope that through this issue of Connections, we will be able to provide you with some ideas and tips in regards to building and maintaining healthy friendships.



# THE ESSENCE of Healthy Friendships



## Co-dependency is not a sign of healthy friendship

Sometimes in order to determine whether a particular friendship is healthy, we need to continuously question the fundamentals of the friendships we form and the effects of the friendships on our growth and most of all, not become too complacent in our friendships. Good friendships require continuous work to sustain them.

Friendships can turn into a co-dependent relationship that is harmful to all parties involved and only provides an illusion of a loving and caring relationship. Here are some signs of a relationship that may seem 'normal' to some but is actually not a healthy one.

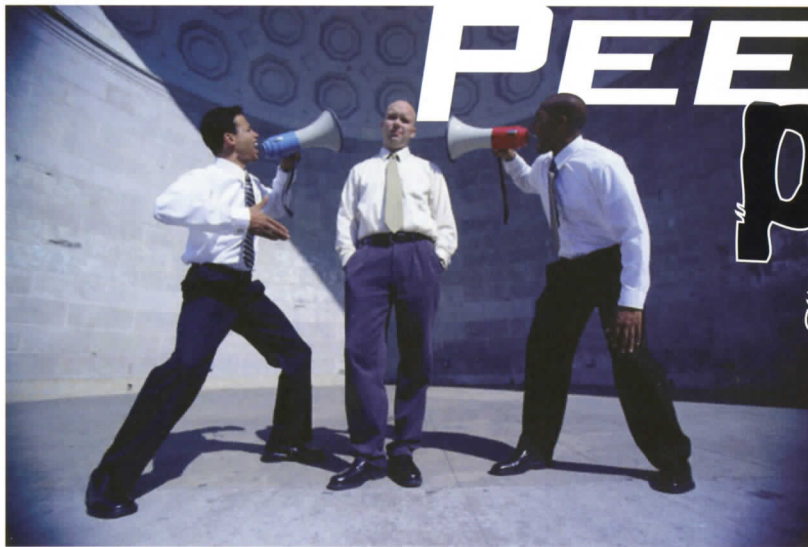
- *My good feelings about who I am stem from being liked by you.*
- *My good feelings about who I am stem from receiving approval from you.*
- *My mental attention is focused on protecting you.*
- *My self-esteem is bolstered by solving your problems.*
- *My own hobbies/interests are put to one side. My time is spent sharing your hobbies/interests.*
- *I am not aware of how I feel. I am aware of how you feel.*
- *I am not aware of what I want - I ask for what you want.*
- *The dreams I have for my future are linked to you.*
- *My fear of rejection determines what I say or do.*
- *I use giving as a way of feeling safe in our relationship.*
- *I put my values aside in order to connect with you.*
- *I value your opinion and way of doing things more than my own.*
- *The quality of my life is in relation to the quality of yours.*

*(Adapted from <http://www.floweressencemagazine.com>)*

The signs above are examples of when our boundaries in the friendship have gone wrong. We have become overly involved with the other person to an extent that we lose our own identity. This is not something new or even rare. Many people at one time or another have faced these issues in their friendship. Some are aware of this and are able to take the right steps to work on it but there are many who get trapped in this destructive pattern and get lost in this web of misery.

There are 3 essentials for a healthy friendship as stated by Kyla Buckingham and these are honesty, respect and good communication. The presence of these 3 aspects is vital for the building and sustainment of a good strong friendship.

- ✂ **Honesty** – without honesty there can be no trust. If you can't trust someone how can you call them a friend, how can you rely on them for help, comfort or a shoulder to lean on? Many friendships falter due to betrayal and deceit, therefore honesty is one of the most essential aspects of friendship.
- ✂ **Respect** – this is another important ingredient for any friendship to grow and flourish. Respect has to be mutual in a friendship – it's not a one-way street. Respect also means that a friend cares enough to challenge you by expressing his or her own thoughts to you and you can do the same without any fear attached.
- ✂ **Open communication** – this encompasses the aspect of honesty and respect. Without open communication it is really difficult to place any trust in the friendship.



# PEER

# Pressure!

You hear about some people who have many friends while others have only a handful – is one better than the other? No, of course not - this is not about quantity but rather quality. Have you known people who have many friends but still feel lonely, lost, have no one to go to in times of trouble? Then when they really need some help and guidance, instead of getting good help, these “friends” end up pressuring them to do things that do not help in anyway. On the other hand, there are people who may only have a handful of friends but are contented and happy with the friendships they have formed and they receive all the support and help that they need. So once again, it’s not important how many friends you have but rather how many of them are ‘true’ friends.

Sometimes it’s not easy to say NO to people especially if you are the type of person who has a need to please those around you, especially your friends and family. There are times when you are in a new environment and in order to fit in, you feel the need to identify yourself with the rest, therefore engaging in activities that may not be healthy for you. The worst part is that you may be aware of this but decide to still follow the crowd.

Peer Pressure is something that is faced by teenagers, young adults, and adults. It is never constrained by age but it is determined by one’s ability to stand by one’s own values and standards and it’s all a measure of one’s sense of worth.

### Why is peer pressure so powerful?

All of us look for a sense of belonging. For the most part we don’t want to be alone, we want to have people to do things with. There is some form of social attachment that we all look for and this is not uncommon or even bad but rather it’s just a natural need.

Along with these, there is also a need for acceptance that many people long for. This is especially so if they spent their whole life being rejected and unappreciated by their friends,

family and surroundings. This is one reason why people turn to gangs and social groups. Movies like *Dangerous Minds*, *To Sir with Love*, *Freedom Writers*, just to name a few, portray examples of how powerful peer pressure can be and the negative influence and effects it can have on an individual. In these groups/ gangs, one can find a strong sense of structure and commitment that becomes very hard to break away from. This structure is something new and stable for many, especially those who come from dysfunctional families, where there are no clear rules, structure and boundaries.

### How to deal with negative peer pressure

1. It’s acceptable to hear your friends out as this is respectful. But once they have proposed their thoughts, you can choose to disagree. Don’t be afraid to say ‘No – I don’t think I would like to participate in this.’ The key word here is **‘don’t be afraid!’** You should stand up for your own values and thoughts and you do not need to apologize for your individuality.
2. Many times we give in to peer pressure because we don’t know our stand and values pertaining to certain things. Therefore is harder to say “no” when you “don’t know”. It is important then to take the time and examine the world around us through reading, asking for advice from parents or trusted adults before saying yes. Talk to a counsellor at the University if you are not sure of the group you are involved in or if you are having a difficult time assessing whether something is good for you.
3. Observe people and the groups with whom they socialize. Observe what they do and the consequences of their actions. When someone tries to argue “everyone’s doing it,” you can prove otherwise. Make positive choices about the people you spend time with, instead of joining a group just because it is there.



## Dealing with

# DIFFICULT



*I need space...*

## Roommates or Housemates

While sharing living quarters can create lasting friendships, some residents encounter difficulties in getting along with their housemates. Are these the most common issues you face when sharing a living space with others?

### =The Fatty Bomb=

I've encountered housemates who've stolen my food (e.g. eggs/biscuits). Some like to leave their clothes in the washing machine for hours, I always have to wait for whole day. There was once my roommate shouted so loud at night because she found a used panty liner in the washing machine after she had used the machine!

### =Anonymous=

When I first moved in, I almost had a heart attack whenever my housemates came back.... I would surely hear the loud and clear "bang!!" of the front door.

### =Cassie=

Sometimes my roommate is just not considerate. For example, when I try to study for a paper the next day, she would watch dramas and laugh out loud, even though she uses earphones. This disturbs me a lot.

### =Blurry Gin=

The worst thing I have encountered was that my housemates expected me to follow their ways. If I did not, they would say that I was arrogant. They would talk negatively about me behind my back but when I am with them, they are very nice.

### =Strawberry=

I had a roommate who liked to change clothes without locking the door...so sometimes when I went into the room, I would accidentally see a naked body!

## Tips on Sharing a House Successfully

### The Basic Attitude

#### Have an Open Mind

Accept that people are different. You may be a morning person and he a night owl; you might be messy and she meticulously neat. Begin with acceptance; you may have an easier experience working things out.

#### Be Open to Compromise

If that involves being extra quiet when the other person is sleeping, or keeping the music in headphones when the other person is in the room, you can find a way to make it work when both of you are committed.

#### Be Considerate

Try to keep your roommate's habits in mind. With this, you can be considerate and try not to do things she finds disturbing. If

that means cleaning up after yourself more, then you should do it.

#### Communicate

Always communicate. Listen to each other's needs more often. If something is a problem, try to sit down and discuss it rather than leave it to explode later. Remember that the other person is paying equal rent and is entitled to a comfortable living environment. Talk amiably and discuss ways to avoid problems in future.

#### If It Isn't Working

If you really can't live with each other, and you have put in a good amount of effort, let the resident management mediate or get more help for you. In severe cases, moving out may be the only solution.



## Strategies for Avoiding Difficult Situation and Roommate Problems

### Set the Rules

It is never too late to set the rules. This prevents everyone from behaving badly and gives a clear knowledge of his/her boundaries. Have an agreement in case one of you persistently ignores the rules, then the other party may call the landlord or resident management to intervene and sort out the matter.

### Consider setting rules on:

- *Common space & electrical items* - Agree on whether to allow friends over and the time for visits, usage of areas/items such as the living room or the television, the level of noise that can be tolerated and etc.
- *Personal items* - Agree on what items are to be shared
- *Cleanliness* - Set standards for cleanliness and make a duty roster
- *Expenses* - List and agree upfront on the common expenses that are to be shared

### Make a Chart

While life becomes easier when the chores are divided, some people may fail to understand this. Consult your roommate and make a daily chore chart. Right from doing the cleaning to washing the dishes; distribute all the chores equally and tell him/her to follow what is written in the chart. This would avoid any clashes, as each person would know what his /her work is for the day.

**Note:** *If none of the tips mentioned above works and your partner continues to be adamant about his/her ways, just change your lodging. Remember, he/she is just not worth the pain.*

### Adapted from:

<http://www.life123.com/parenting/education/dorm/dorm-life.shtml>  
 "Dealing with Difficult College Roommates" by Alice Langholt.

<http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/how-to-deal-with-a-difficult-roommate-6464.html> "Sharing a House or Apartment Successfully" by Catherine Walsh.

<http://www.suite101.com/content/getting-along-with-roommates-a139394>



### =Ji Chuan=

We're all about the same age and we go through similar situations. We can relate to each other pretty well. For example, during exams everyone in the apartment feels the same stress. We share the common problem of money, so we work together to save where we can. I think it's our teamwork that brought us closer together.

### =Wen Ni=

I am particularly close to my housemate and she has been an important part of my daily well-being in the hostel. She is my confidante and my best friend. My roommates and 2 housemates in particular look to me as their house 'mother'. They have made my campus life more fulfilling now because I have this sense of belonging. I built the trust & sisterly love between my closest roommates and housemates.

### =Anonymous=

My current roommate, Veanne Tan, is nice and caring. Whenever she sleeps late at night, studies or watches movies,

she would switch off the light and continue with a mini table lamp. Even if I sleep at 9pm or 10pm, she would switch the light off.

Although we are in different courses, we would exchange life experiences and introduce interesting people that we meet to each other. These indirectly lead to life full of joy and laughter. However, she will be graduating this year. I shall cherish the moments with her. I hope that she will have a bright career ahead, be optimistic and enjoy life to the fullest!!

### =Strawberry=

Siew Lee is a very good roommate. She is willing to share a lot of things like her clothes, fruits and rojak. She also does not complain much unless I get too noisy. Once, I came back late at night crying, and she woke up to give me a hug and comfort me!

*So, are you an ideal housemate/roommate? Or are you a difficult one?*



# FRIENDSHIPS

## Beyond Graduation...



*Campus is known as a place where many good friendships blossom. Adriel Chiang, Tay Ee Lin and Ying Hoe, graduates of Sun-U, are glad to share their stories on the good friends they have found in their university years.*

**Adriel Chiang Mun Kin, ACCA 2009, PJ**



On my first day in the university, I felt rather lonely as none of my secondary schoolmates were studying in Sun-U. This changed when I met V. He used to sit beside me in class. He is a brilliant guy and I would always refer to him with any doubts about lecture. At that time we were also staying in the same hostel block. We used to have discussions and revision together. He motivated me a lot

through my studies and also taught me the techniques to respond to exam questions. During our free time, we would go for sports activities together such as swimming, badminton and futsal. I am good in sports but he wasn't. So I used to teach and guide him on the correct swimming techniques. Both of us have always envied each other; he is good in his studies while I am good at sports.

One day, we were doing our warm ups before swimming. I was doing pushups and suddenly, V sat on my back with his legs lifted up from the ground. My body was unable to take his weight and fell to the ground. V is a very playful guy and he assumed that I am strong enough to support his weight. Anyway, I was fine and there was no pain and we continued to swim thereafter. The next day however, I couldn't get up from my bed. I felt like a disabled person who can't get up from the bed. I tried harder to get myself up and I started to feel a pain coming from my spine. My mom brought me to see the doctor and it was diagnosed that I had a crack in between of my spinal cord and I will not able to go for any sports until the crack recovers. I started to hate V whenever I feel like going for sports. I hated him so much until I didn't even bother to look at him and I don't treat him as my good friend as before.

A few weeks later, I was walking back to my hostel and I saw V was sitting at the badminton court. At first, I wanted to ignore him and just walk back to my unit but I saw that V was very upset sitting alone, so I walked towards him. I asked him "Hey, why are you sitting here alone? Are you ok?" He told me that he felt really guilty about what he had done to me and he hoped that I would be able to forgive him. He even said that he was willing to pay for all my medical treatment until I recovered from my pain. I was touched by what he said and finally I forgave him for what he had done to me.

From day that onwards, I really began to appreciate our friendship a lot and I believe that in order to maintain a lasting friendship, we should learn to forgive and forget the mistakes that our friends make and not to keep friends only when you need them to lend a hand or bring you happiness. Without friends, we will end up walking alone in life.

**Chong Ying Hoe, ACCA 2009, Sarawak**



Adrian Chan was my hostel roommate back in 2008. He was also an ACCA student. When he first came, I being the more senior person in the university, brought him around to find places and food and also some shopping. That's how our friendship started.

*What did you do together?*

We shopped, ate, played badminton, jogged, talked, and of course studied. Sometimes we also discussed some serious issues like religion, politics, economy, etc. The funny part was when we sang in our room and he danced.

*Now that both of you have graduated and gone your own ways, how do you maintain your friendship?*

When we graduated, we seldom chat or see each other as he went back Penang to work. Since then, we have only kept in touch "electronically" - seasonal SMS, MSN, Facebook.



*What impact or difference did he make in your life?*

I think it is his sense of humour! He is funny and easy going. From him I learnt not to be so serious.

*Did conflicts happen? How did you guys resolve it?*

I am glad that there were no big issues, at least not that I can remember. We usually talk and resolve disagreements over dinner or at the study table.

*What makes a lasting friendship?*

Respect, trust and staying in touch.

**Tay Ee Lin, SHNS 2010, Kuantan**



I knew Suet Ling on the first day of our degree programme when we were attending the Orientation. She was my first friend in the Psychology course. From there we somehow clicked and remained as good friends till today.

*How did you maintain the friendship?*

We have learnt to accept each other as who we are. It is more of a give and take situation. Despite our differences in personality, our friendship grew strong. Our similarity

is obvious, especially when I recall those times when we would work towards redeeming vouchers to get free movie tickets in newspaper and those times were fun.

*Were there conflicts, arguments, or huge fights? How did you resolve them?*

There was one clear conflict we had. It all happened when Suet Ling strongly voiced her opinion on an incident where her friends were being taken advantage of. I, on the other hand, did not view it too seriously and was prepared to let things go. That got Suet Ling quite upset and she somewhat 'exploded' at me. I felt the tension during our conversations due to our different stand on the matter. But soon after, Suet Ling made the first move to apologize and we resolved the matter calmly.

*Now that both of you have graduated and gone your own ways, is the distance deterring the friendship from growing?*

I don't think so. We have been constantly contacting each other even after graduation. We still SMS each other weekly, updating each other on interesting events in our lives. Sometimes we also meet to catch up. Moreover with Facebook, we keep each other updated. Lot of times, I see her taking the initiative to ask about how I am doing with my life.

Let's

HEAR it for

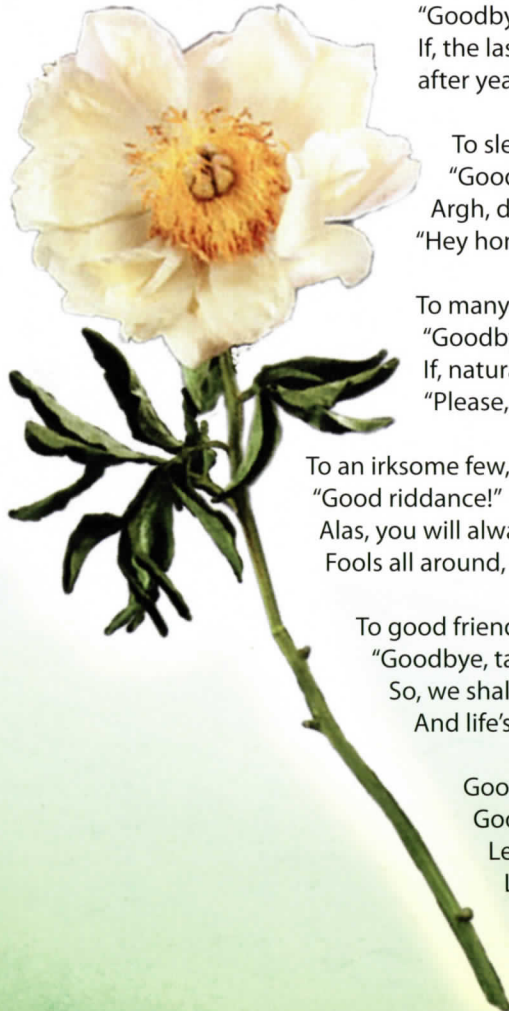
FRIENDSHIP!



# Student Services Department Counselling Unit Plan 2011

Jan	Feb	Mar
Peer Counselling Volunteer: Quality of Helper Peer Counselling Volunteer: Non-violent Communication Workshop Connections Newsletter	Peer Counselling Volunteer: DISC personality profiling Workshop Exhibition	Group Counselling: Theme - Relationship Peer Counselling Volunteer: Basic Counselling Skills
Apr	May	June
Peer Counselling Volunteer: Group Counselling Peer Counselling Volunteer: Quality of Helper Peer Counselling Volunteer: Movie Sharing (Level 2)	Exhibition	Staff Advisory Team Training Peer Counselling Volunteer: Team Building Outing
July	Aug	Sept
Connection Newsletter Staff Training: Basic Counselling Skills	Exhibition Peer Counselling Volunteer: Group Counselling Peer Counselling Volunteer: Community Visit	Group Counselling Peer Counselling Volunteer: Movie Sharing (Level 2) Peer Counselling Volunteer: Non-violent Communication Workshop
Oct	Nov	Dec
PCV Peer Counselling Volunteer: Quality of Helper Peer Counselling Volunteer: Basic Counselling Skills	Exhibition	Staff Training: Basic Counselling Skills Staff Advisory Team: Meeting and Review

## Goodbye; Good Riddance



To acquaintances, I say  
"Goodbye, keep in touch."  
If, the last part we hold true  
after years of "Hey, how are you?"

To sleepless nights, I say  
"Good riddance!"  
Argh, deadlines always say  
"Hey honey, coming your way!"

To many who've helped me, I say  
"Goodbye, and thank you."  
If, natural law does hold true:  
"Please, let me do the same for you."

To an irksome few, I say  
"Good riddance!"  
Alas, you will always find  
Fools all around, all the time!

To good friends, I say  
"Goodbye, take care."  
So, we shall age and grow  
And life's gentle boat we'll row.

Goodbye; Good riddance.  
Goodbye or good riddance,  
Let this not be adieu, though:  
Let them be a souvenir of time,  
Let them leave marks on my memory.

by Lee Ai-Suan



STUDENT SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT

Please contact us at:  
counselling@sunway.edu.my  
Tel: 03-74918622 Extn. 8019  
or walk in to SSD to make enquiries