Social support is all-important to our health and success. The CalBearsSayHi campaign is here to help us feel more connected to each other at Cal. It invites us to slow down a bit and notice and acknowledge those around us.

Studies confirm what many of us know about the benefits of having friends: lowered stress levels, a heartier immune system, and an increased ability to concentrate and learn. Friends help us be healthier and happier and are worth the time investment.

Each day offers dozens of opportunities to connect with potential and established friends. Being the giver or recipient of a friendly greeting can be an instant day brightener and add to the sense of belonging and community we want every Cal Bear to feel.
Just get started with a simple greeting: “Hi, I’m ____.” Learn names! That becomes an immediate connection and makes for smoother conversations in the future.

**Practice kindness toward yourself and others.** Don’t be quick to label someone as unlikeable. And don’t assign negative labels to yourself. Our own actions and thoughts influence our happiness, so try to catch negative thoughts and reframe them into more positive ones. Instead of “I’m never going to make new friends,” you can say to yourself, “I’m a nice person and a good friend. Once people get to know me, they’ll like me.”

**Keep up with common social topics.** Have some basic, everyday knowledge about movies, popular music, current events. Start with something that people can relate to and is non-controversial.

**Practice.** Practice your social skills with people you interact with daily, such as cashiers at the dining commons. Say “Hi” and make some small talk (talking about the weather is fine). Try to listen with good eye contact and sincere interest.

**Be open to all types of people.** Being able to get along with people is a highly valued skill in the work environment. Go ahead and strengthen these skills before you hit the job market!

**Appreciate all kinds of friendships.** Some last only a little while, perhaps just the duration of a project or a semester. Other friendships you make at Cal will last a lifetime. They all start with a “Hi.”

**At the end of the day, think about how you contributed to a friendlier campus.** Also consider what you will do tomorrow to build community at Cal.

**Don’t Give Up.** Even if you don’t have a strong friend group yet, don’t worry—there are a lot of people on campus. Whether you are quiet, outgoing or somewhere in between, keep putting yourself out there. All of us can benefit from having one more friend in our lives.

**Look for “Random Acts of Friendliness” on campus this year.** Let us know if you would like to be a Friendliness Volunteer who spreads extra cheer on campus.

**Follow the Tang Center’s Love Café at Cal tumblr blog for all relationship concerns (family, roommates, professors, lab mates, romantic partners).**