

Social support is all-important

If you would like to have more friends, or you would like to deepen your current friendships, consider the following:

- An obvious place to make new friends is class. Smile at your classmates. Sit next to someone new in class and start up a conversation. Some possible conversation starters: make a comment or ask a question about the last lecture, reading, or problem set; offer a compliment (you like their clothes, the question they asked); or help out (you noticed they were out last week, offer to lend them your notes).
- Get involved in activities you enjoy, and you will improve your chances of meeting someone with mutual interests. Check out student clubs, exercise classes, volunteer opportunities.
- Set aside time at least twice a week to be with a friend. Chat, laugh, study, go for a walk, or work through a conflict (even good friends fight!).
- Try not to compete. Be happy instead of jealous when your friends succeed--and they will be more likely to celebrate your accomplishments in return.
- Be open to different kinds of friendships. Not all of them need to be based on a deep, emotional connection. You might have exercise friends with whom you enjoy lighthearted conversation. Some friendships last only a little while, perhaps just the duration of a semester or class project. Others friendships you make at Cal may last a lifetime.
- Let close friends take care of you. Do you tend to take care of others a lot? Are you private about your needs? Allow yourself to be vulnerable and receive help and emotional support from others.
- Enjoy online and email friendships, if you wish. But remember to have a balance of "live" friendships. There is no substitute for conversation and affection from a friend sitting next to you.
- Know when to say "no" and when to say "yes." Spending time with people who aren't supportive can add stress and take away valuable time. So surround yourself with people who care about you.