

FRIENDSHIP EVENT KIT

Run your first, or fiftieth, gathering.

Why bother?

Loneliness is not a personal failure. It is a structural problem. Most adults in the developed world report having fewer close friends than they did ten years ago. Work colonised the time we used to give to community. Digital connection substituted for, rather than supplemented, physical presence. The result: more contact, less connection.

The research is clear. Loneliness carries roughly the same health risk as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. It accelerates cognitive decline, raises cortisol, and shortens life. The US Surgeon General declared it an epidemic in 2023. The UK appointed a Minister for Loneliness in 2018. These are not soft concerns.

But the fix is not complicated. It is just effortful. Friendships require activation energy. They do not form by accident in adulthood. They form when someone creates the conditions, a room, a reason to talk, and a bit of structure. That is exactly what this kit helps you do.

Researchers estimate most adults have fewer than three close friends. One in four report having no one to confide in. These numbers have worsened significantly in the last two decades, across every age group.

Solitude vs loneliness

Solitude is chosen. You step away, recharge, and return. Loneliness is unwanted. You want connection and cannot find it, or cannot sustain it. Both can exist in a crowd. A person surrounded by acquaintances can be profoundly lonely. A person alone in a cabin can be at peace.

This distinction matters because the goal of a Friendship Event is not to eliminate alonetime. It is to ensure that when people want connection, they can find it. You are building infrastructure. Small, human, affordable infrastructure.

A note on circles

Robin Dunbar's research identified that humans naturally organize social relationships in layers. An intimate circle of roughly five people. A close circle of around fifteen. A wider active network of about fifty. Beyond that, familiar faces rather than real relationships.

Most people are running deficits across every layer. A Friendship Event directly addresses the middle circle: the fifteen to fifty range. These are not your closest confidants, but they are the

people who make life feel inhabited. Neighbors. Former colleagues. Friendly acquaintances who never quite became friends. This kit helps those relationships take root.

How to run a Friendship Event

Six steps. Nothing you cannot handle.

1 Choose your format and size

Decide whether you want an intimate gathering (8-15 people) or a bigger community event (30-100+). Your first event should probably be small. Easier to manage, more personal, faster to learn from.

Quick tips

- Dinner parties and picnics are the easiest starter formats
- Keep your first event to 2-3 hours
- Pick a venue you already have access to

2 Invite the right mix of people

A Friendship Event works best when it's a mix: some people who know each other, some who don't. Aim for about 50% familiar faces, 50% new to each other. The familiar faces lower anxiety. The new faces create possibility. Include your Conexus event link or QR code with every invite so guests can build their profile before they arrive.

Quick tips

- Invite people from different circles: work, neighbourhood, hobbies
- Ask each guest to bring one person you haven't met
- Send invites 2-3 weeks ahead and follow up once
- Create your event in Conexus first at manage.app.getconexus.com, then copy the share link
- Put the Conexus link in the invite body, not just as a footnote. Name the benefit: 'Fill this out and you'll know who to look for before you walk in'
- Encourage guests to complete their interest profile at least a few days before the event. The more profiles filled, the more useful your pre-event data

3 Plan a simple structure, shaped by what Conexus tells you

The secret ingredient is light structure. Without it, people stick to who they already know. With too much, it feels like a corporate workshop. The sweet spot is 2-3 gentle activities or prompts. Now you have an advantage: Conexus shows you who is coming and what they care about before anyone walks in the door. Use that. If your guest list skews toward runners, suggest a morning run the next day. If half the room plays chess, name that. If two people share an obscure passion, seat them close. The structure stops being generic, and becomes specific to this room.

Quick tips

- Check your Conexus dashboard 48 hours before the event. Note shared interests across the group
- Adjust seating, table groupings, or opening prompts based on what you find
- If a dominant interest emerges, name it in your welcome: 'I know several of you are into...'
- Use a 'name + one interesting fact' intro round
- Put 2-3 conversation starter cards on each table, drawn from the prompts on page 3
- Include at least one mixer activity that moves people between groups

4 Set the scene

Environment matters. Warm lighting, music at background volume, seating that makes people face each other. These choices make a real difference to how safe people feel opening up. Optimise for conversation, not presentation.

Quick tips

- Avoid theatre-style seating. It creates an audience dynamic
- Round tables or clusters work better than long rows
- Name tags remove a surprising amount of friction
- Offer both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks

5 Host with warmth

You do not need to be an extrovert. Your job as host is simply to make people feel welcome. Greet everyone at the door. Introduce people to each other by name, with a sentence about why they might connect. Watch for anyone who looks left out.

Quick tips

- Keep your welcome short, 2 minutes maximum, but genuine
- Name the goal out loud: 'This is a space to meet people'
- Check in with quieter guests during the event
- Circulate. Don't spend the whole night with one group

6 Follow up and build momentum

The event doesn't end when people leave. A message the next day keeps the warmth alive and signals that this is something that continues. One event is a nice evening. Regular events become a community.

Quick tips

- Send a thank-you message to all guests within 24 hours
- Share a photo or two, with permission
- Ask if anyone wants to help co-host the next one

- Aim to run events quarterly. Consistency builds the circle

Friendship is a verb. The feelings follow the actions, not the other way around. You do not wait until you feel close to someone before you invest in them. You invest, and then you feel close. Every person in that room is waiting for someone to go first.

CONVERSATION STARTER CARDS

Print, cut, and place on tables. No right answers.

Why prompts work

Small talk is a tax on attention. It costs energy and produces little. Good questions shift gears fast. Research on closeness, including the Aron et al. 'fast friends' studies, shows that mutual self-disclosure accelerates connection more reliably than shared activity alone. A well-chosen question does in ten minutes what small talk takes months to do.

Place cards on tables before guests arrive. No instruction needed beyond 'feel free to use these'. Most people reach for them within the first twenty minutes. The questions below balance vulnerability with lightness. None require deep disclosure. All invite genuine thought.

Let Conexus do the matching

Before the event, review your Conexus dashboard and note which interests cluster across your guest list. Use that data to seat people intentionally. Two people who both listed hiking, a shared love of true crime podcasts, a table of people who work in education. They do not need to know you arranged it. They just need to be in the same spot. The conversation starter cards accelerate what Conexus already started.

At the end of the event, remind guests that Conexus keeps them connected after they leave. Show them how to message each other in the app. The in-person spark, the app keeps it alive.

01

What's something you've changed your mind about in the last five years?

02

What's a small thing that reliably makes your day better?

03

Is there something you've been meaning to learn or try? What's stopping you?

04

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received, and do you follow it?

05

Who in your life would be surprised to know you're here today?

06

What's something about your neighborhood or city that you love, that others might not know?

07

If you could invite anyone, living or dead, to this table, who would it be and why?

08

What does friendship mean to you at this stage of your life?

09

What's something you're quietly proud of that you rarely talk about?

10

What would you do with your time if you weren't worried about what people thought?

11

What's a skill or interest you have that surprises people when they find out?

12

When did you last feel genuinely part of a community? What made it feel that way?

Cut along the dashed lines. One card per table, or scatter several.