

Friendly

*To be friendly is to approach other people as though they do or will like you, and to like them in the process. Only people who genuinely care for each other will be able to sustain this benign relationship, for friendship thrives on commitment. If I want your friendship because it will be useful to me in getting a better job, or you want my friendship so that you can get a date with my sister, nothing will work. Friendship may be useful to me—you may be able to introduce me to an influential hiring officer—but it will be friendship only in name, if when you fail to introduce me my friendship shrivels up. Not that friendship is love, for it does not require the deepest taking on of another person as your responsibility. To love is to become the other person, to form a friendship with someone is to care for the other person as **another** person.*

Examples

1 An old friendship

I have many friends, in different stages of friendship, ranging from love at one end to acquaintance at the other. R and I have long been friendly with each other, at exactly the mid point on the above scale. If we need one another, we are there for advice and support; not for financial aid, not for physical labor or physical love, but as extremely congenial aids to knowing and surviving life in the world, with its unexpected complexities. R will tell me his relation with his wife and child, with confidence that his interests are the same as mine. I will ask him for advice in publishing choices or travel planning. We have known each other so long that we can rapidly interpret the other's opinions, and pick up conversations that we had begun with each other years ago.

2 Naturally friendly

At the gym, where I start every morning, there is a middle aged woman—I don't even know her name, though she lives in my neighborhood—who is very friendly. She has only recently started coming to the gym, so that she is not familiar with some of us old-timers, but she behaves as though she knows everyone and knows them equally. She talks about weather and our town with my wife, about the local school system with a teacher at the college; and so on with any one she meets, suiting her topic to the individual. Genuinely friendly, this woman creates a fluent and easy atmosphere around herself, enters the mini society of the gym gracefully, givingly, and departs as easily. If I meet her in town she is the same. It is hard to imagine a setting in which I wouldn't find her friendliness welcome.