

WHO IS A GOOD FRIEND? (PART 2 OF 2)

Rating:

Description: A two-part lesson on having good, close Muslims friends. Part 2 gives tips on how to find and make good Muslim friends.

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Objectives

- To learn about some places where one can meet Muslims to foster friendships.
- To understand some tips to engage in conversation.
- How to be a good friend?

Arabic Terms

- As-Salamu Alaikum* -peace and blessings be on you.
- Eid* - festival or celebration. Muslims celebrate two major religious holidays, known as *Eid-ul-Fitr* (which takes place after *Ramadan*) and *Eid-ul-Adha* (which occurs at the time of the *Hajj*).
- Hijab*– The word *hijab* holds several different meanings, including conceal, hide and screen. It commonly refers to a woman's headscarf and in broader terms to modest clothing and behaviour.
- Ramadan* - The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the month in which the obligatory fasting has been prescribed.
- Salam*- The Islamic greeting such as '*As-Salamu Alaikum*'.

Tip 1. Where to Meet Muslims?

Close relationships will not happen overnight, but there are steps you can take to help you connect with other Muslims and make friends.



Attend the Friday prayer and some other prayers on a weekly basis. Even though it is time for worship, not socialization, you will get to know fellow Muslims who come regularly to the mosque and develop a special spiritual bond with them.

Take a class offered at your local mosque or Islamic center for new Muslims to meet others with common interests. Websites such as www.facebook.com and www.twitter.com can help you find local groups or start your own and connect with others who share similar interests.

Volunteering can be a great way to help others while also meeting new Muslims. Islamic centers are always looking for volunteers close to *Eid* and in Ramadan or other major events during the year. It provides an excellent opportunity to connect with other Muslims.

Attend community dinners at your mosque that are typically offered every month. Even if you are not used to the ethnic food or find it spicy, you will be able to meet new Muslims in a socially relaxed environment.

Attend Muslim community events, conferences, and lectures either in your locality or in neighboring cities or states where you can meet people with similar interests. You will meet new people, try new foods, and get a chance to buy clothes and books.

Tip 2. Learn to Engage in Conversation

Some people seem to instinctively know how to start a conversation with anyone in any place. If you're not one of these types, here are some easy ways to start a conversation with someone new:

Practice Islamic greeting and shake hands with confidence. Many people struggle with saying '*As-Salamu Alaikum.*' You have to practice it so it becomes second nature in social gatherings. Remember, the Prophet said, "When two Muslims meet (give *salam*), and shake hands, they are forgiven their sins before they part (with each other)." (*Abu Dawud*)

Remark on the mosque and the Muslims around you or the occasion. You could make some positive comments, such as: "I love the mosque," or "The food's great. Have you tried the chicken?".

Ask an open-ended question, one that requires more than just a yes or no answer. Ask a question that begins with one of the 5 W's or 1 H: who, where, when, what, why, or how. For example,

- “Who do you know here?”
- “Where do you normally go for Friday prayer?”
- “When did you move here?”
- “How is the food?”

Most people enjoy talking about themselves so asking a question is a good way to start a conversation.

Use a compliment. For example, “I really like your *hijab*, can I ask where you got it from?” or “Looks like you’ve done this before, can you show me?”

Listen effectively. People observed that when they were talking to Prophet Muhammad it was as if he was only interested in listening to them, he was fully focused. One of the keys to effective communication is to focus fully on the speaker and show interest in what’s being said. Nod occasionally and smile at the person. The Prophet said, “Your smile in the face of your brothers is an act of charity” (Tirmidhi). Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal cues like “yes” or “uh huh” and don’t interrupt.

Tip 3. How to Be a Good Friend

Allah says in the Quran, “**O mankind, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you may know one another.**” (Quran 49:13). ‘They’ don’t just need to know us, we need to know ‘them’ too. We need to move out of our comfort zones.

Remember that making a friend is just the beginning of a journey into a relationship that will take time to deepen. Becoming friends is a process that requires time, effort, and a genuine interest in the other person. Follow some simple steps:

- Be the friend that you would like to have.** Treat your friend just as you want them to treat you. The Prophet advised, “**None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.**” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*)
- Be a good listener.** To develop a solid friendship with someone, be prepared to listen and support them just as you expect from them.

- Invest in the friendship.** No friendship will flourish without regular attention. Invite your new Muslim friend for dinner and plan activities with them.
- Give your friend space.** Do not be too needy and be sure not to abuse your friend's generosity.
- Be forgiving.** No one is perfect and every friend will make mistakes. Learn to forgive, it will deepen the bond of friendship between you. Allah describes the believers in the Noble Quran as those who constantly strive to have clean hearts, free from malice, hatred and spite. They supplicate for Allah's help to achieve this, "**Our Lord, forgive us and those of our brothers who preceded us in faith, and do not place in our hearts any rancor against those who believe. Our Lord! You are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful.**" (Quran 59:10)

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