

7 TOP TIPS FOR BUILDING FRIENDSHIP ACROSS CULTURES



1 FIND SOMETHING IN COMMON

Friendship is forged on joint interests, but that common ground may be less obvious between people from different walks of life. The 'universal languages' work wonders, such as food, music, craft and sport. With food, there are no hierarchies, everyone has opinions and tastes which make for great discussion.

2 BUILD SHARED EXPERIENCES

As you find common ground, you can start to build shared experiences. Doing something together takes the pressure off making conversation all the time, and gives you something to enjoy, look back on, and laugh about. Playing sport, swapping recipes, or joining a class where you learn a new skill are excellent starters.

3 GIVE AND RECEIVE HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is an essential part of every culture and there's dignity in both giving and receiving. Cooking someone a meal shows love and respect, but enjoying a meal someone else has cooked shows honour to them as well.



4 BE KIND

Every culture understands kindness. Remembering someone's birthday, knowing their favourite flowers, or sports team, remembering to call them when they've got an exam or a driving test to wish them well, anything that goes beyond the normal niceties to let them know you really care about them.



5 SACRIFICE SOME SCREEN-TIME

Research suggests that one of the biggest factors preventing people from engaging in their communities is time spent watching TV. Smartphones have exacerbated this trend and increased people's exposure to the same views over and over again. Giving up one or two nights a week of TV or social media to get out of your digital or physical bubble will be a gift to you and someone else.

6 SHARE STORIES

All of us are wired for stories. Stories shape how we understand the world, how we define ourselves and how we relate to each other. They're an easy and engaging way of sharing your life with friends. Try exchanging funny anecdotes, family memories, and lessons learned. If deeper topics come up, a story can be an easy way to share how you came to a viewpoint without needing to have a debate.



7 BE CURIOUS, NOT JUDGEMENTAL

Curiosity reserves judgment and asks questions. It takes the posture of a learner. It hones the art of listening. At Bridges, we like to say, 'Listening is loving,' when someone shares something, try to remember it and ask them about it next time. If you're tempted to have a strong reaction to something, take a moment to pause, and try to see things through the other person's eyes.