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5 WAYS FRIENDS INFLUENCE YOUR SUCCESS, ACCORDING TO SCIENCE



By SoFi General | Mar 14, 2017 | Lifestyle | No Comments

There's no doubt that your squad makes your life better. Your friends pick you up when you're down, celebrate your milestone moments, and hang out with you just because you rock in between. But beyond providing awesome support—and lots of laughs—several studies reveal that your friends can also influence your financial achievements, career performance and opportunities, and general life success.

Here are five ways, according to science, that your friends can help you get more out of work and life:

1. Friends motivate you to work harder. If you want to get better grades, earn that next promotion, or even make more money, hang out with people who are already doing those things. A [2015 study conducted by researchers at the HSE Centre for Institutional Studies](#) found that the academic performance of over 100 Russian university students was similar to that of their friends. Based on a 2013–2014 examination of the students' social network data, researchers concluded that while the students didn't choose their friends because of their friends' grades, those who hung out with high achievers improved their own performance. And what about those who hung out with underachievers? You guessed it—their grades dropped.

2. Friends can bolster your self control. Don't underestimate the power of friends to help you resist temptation. A series of [studies by psychological scientists at Duke University](#) revealed that people who have low self control are better able to resist their temptations when they surround themselves with strong-willed friends. Even more heartening: We may do this subconsciously. The study found that during times of weakened self-control, participants actually preferred people who they perceived as having more self control. In addition, study subjects with low self control reported more dependence on their partner, if their partner had high self control. The researchers' big takeaway: When it comes to staying on track, we get by with a little help from our friends.

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3. Friends can improve your work experience—and performance. Having buddies at work not only makes your job more fun, but it can also ensure you do your job better. On the flip side, feeling lonely at work can negatively impact your job performance, according to [a study conducted by professors at the Chinese University of Hong Kong](#). The study showed that employees who felt lonely at work performed more poorly in their specific roles and were less likely to take on additional responsibility than those who didn't feel lonely. The researchers contend that having friends at work matters: When employees experience high-quality relationships at work, they're more apt to put more effort into their jobs, and see better results.

4. Different groups of friends leads to more success. Having friends is great, but having friends from various social groups is even better. In his extensive [study of social networks](#), Ronald Burt, a professor at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, discovered that simply networking inside one cluster of people — for instance, making contact with just tech people or finance people— doesn't offer much advantage. Instead the most successful people—labeled "brokers" by Burt—move between different clusters, passing information and building bridges between groups. These brokers reap the most rewards; they get promoted more quickly, earn more money, and receive more recognition. The lesson: If you haven't already, get out of your comfort zone and make friends from different departments, industries and professions. Your social life *and* career will benefit.

5. Friends can make you healthier. Researchers from Concordia University in Canada [studied a group of international students who experienced](#) "a major social change" after moving to Montreal. Over a five-month period, the group was asked questions regarding their social interactions and whether they were lonely. During that time, researchers also tracked their heart rate fluctuations. The study showed that those who remained isolated showed decreased heart rate variability, an indicator that they were at an increased risk of poor health and cardiac diseases. In contrast, those who developed strong social networks had increased heart variability and were healthier overall.

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Strengthen your squad

Your friends really do influence you, and often for the better. But how do you cultivate new connections while maintaining your current ones—and still have time for work and sleep? You don't have to pack your calendar with coffee and lunch dates; instead, be strategic with your time and intentional with your actions.

Here are some tips for growing and strengthening your social network:

Get out of your comfort zone. Strive to make a few friends outside your regular group. Join a sports team, participate in an affinity group at work, or ask a colleague to introduce you to his or her favorite coworker.

Find common ground. To make an immediate connection with someone, it's helpful to explore what you have in common and [transform the way you approach networking](#). For example, [change your growth mindset](#). Also, when meeting new people, ask questions that get past the typical "Where do you work? What do you do?" Instead, ask where they went to college, whether they played any sports, and where they grew up. If your meeting is pre-scheduled—an interview, for example—do a little research beforehand on LinkedIn to get a well-rounded picture of your interviewer, including his or her [personal brand](#).

Find ways to give back. Whether you make work connections or start new friendships, all relationships are two-way streets. So, remember to [regularly give back](#). Make time to drop in on new work friends before heading home on a Friday, and periodically send quick thank you emails to your best "broker" and your mentors.

Your friends bring a lot to your life and can even influence your success. Cultivate your friendships thoughtfully, and they'll pay off in multiple ways.

Want to thank your friends for helping you succeed at work and beyond? Share this with them. To crush more career goals, put SoFi's [Career team](#) in play for customized coaching and other personalized career-planning services.

