Research Synthesis

Problem Statement

How might we coordinate effective interaction planning for the primary user so that they can confidently and successfully engage in many social and professional situations, leading to the desired effect of building strong, lasting connections and making a positive impression?

Background

Developing and maintaining relationships, whether they are personal or professional, is often challenging, especially during initial interactions like first dates or business coffee chats.

Understanding the experiences and challenges people face in these situations is essential for improving relationship-building processes and ensuring positive outcomes.

Why is developing and maintaining relationships so difficult?

A. Summary

My research was among 25 below 35 across Canada in surveys & user interviews. The research aimed to gain insights into the challenges and experiences people encounter when developing and maintaining relationships during initial interactions. It seeks to identify opportunities for enhancing relationship-building, both personally and professionally, to create meaningful and lasting connections.

My research revealed that most people want to build relationships. It also revealed the following for initial interaction and continual interactions; making a strong lasting impression is extremely important. Continuing to develop that connection is also highly valued. Some challenges include; working remotely, plans falling apart, awkward silences, not having common ground. Some specific research topics that I had insights to included;

- **For Previous Interactions:**
  Initial interactions are most memorable when they are fun, exciting, deep and unique. With a lot of personalization and common ground for connection.

- **For Current Interactions:**
  Confidence is key to developing relationships, openness and genuinity being important, sharing social media to stay in touch.

- **For Future Interactions:**
  People value social and emotional intelligence, some popular themes and choice words included; intentionality, kindness, empathetic, communicative, transparency, open mindedness, selflessness, humility, authenticity, and genuineness.

B. Research Methods

1. Online Survey 19 questions, (2-6 mins)

The goal of the survey was to understand how and why people develop genuine relationships. What the interests are, what the causes are and also what are the challenges. The first few questions were more demographic based to get an idea of the profile of the survey participants (Age, Sex, full time studies, Work style) Most of the main questions were created to be easily quantifiable/qualifiable for research analysis. Responses were collected from 25 participants.

Building Relationships DTTP (Survey)

Building Relationships DTTP (Responses)

2. User Interviews (10 min)

The goal of the user interviews was to dig deeper into specific research examples of professional and personal interactions of relationships Previous, Current and Future Interactions.

C. Demographics

	Online Survey	**User Interviews**
No. Participants	24	5
Age	20.8% 18-24, 66.7% 25-30, 12.5% 31-35	100% 25-29
Sex	16 M 7 F 1 Non binary	2 F 3 M
Current student (full-time studies)	87.5% no 12.5 % yes	5 No
Work style	In-person 16.7% Hybrid 54.2% Remote 29.2%	Mixed
Country of Residence	24 Canada	5 Canada

Potential Biases:

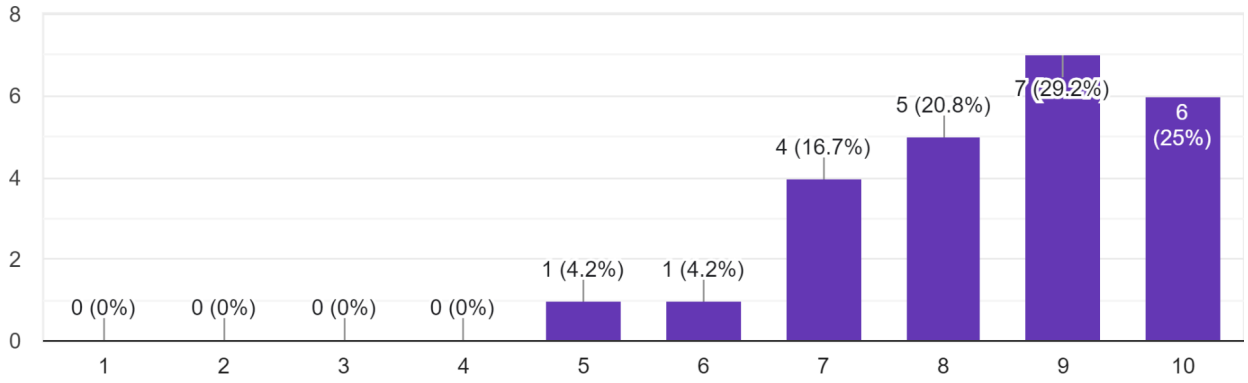
- There was no balanced gender response
- Over 80% were working professionals
- Over 50% were in the 25-30 age range
- North american bias (Canada) - different methods/apps might be used internationally

D. Synthesized Data - Online Surveys

1. Initial interactions

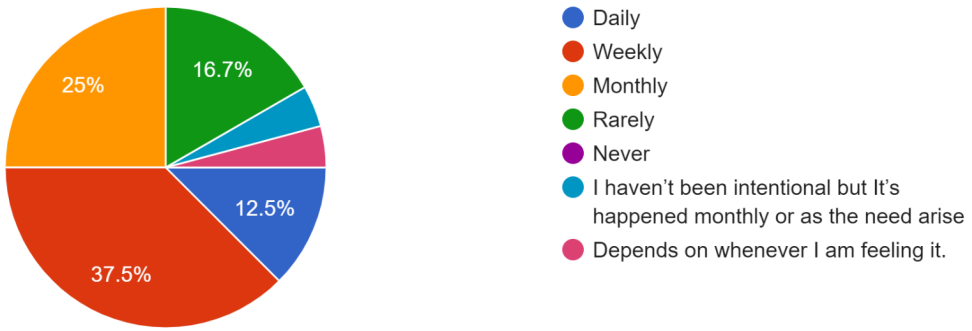
On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident do you feel when engaging in initial interactions (e.g., business coffee chat, first date) ?

24 responses



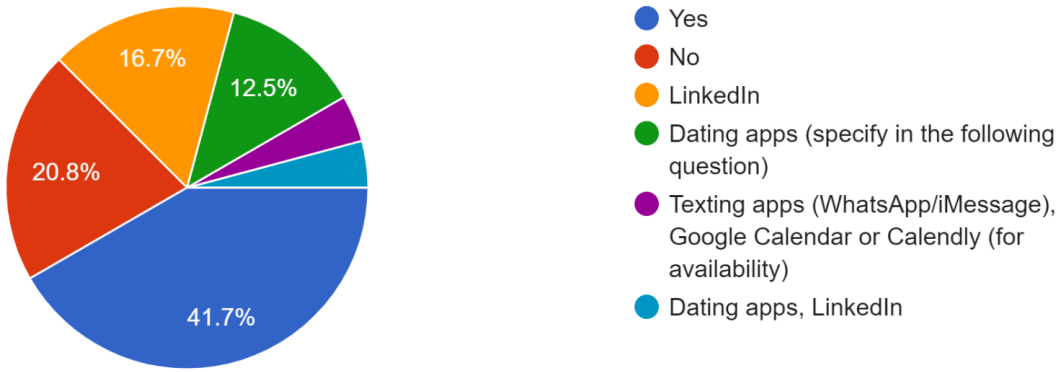
How often do you actively seek out opportunities for initial interactions in your personal and professional life? (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely, Never)

24 responses



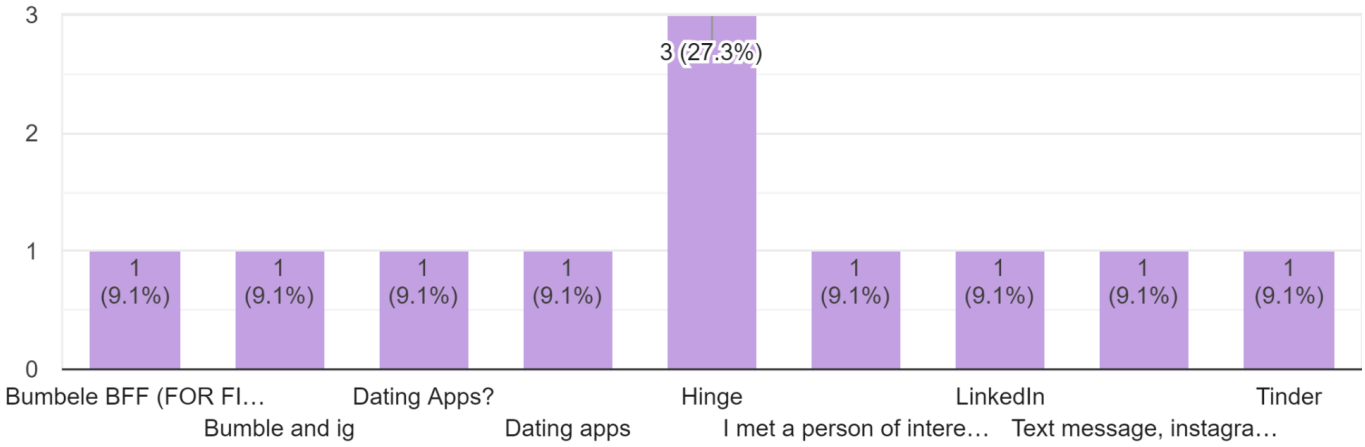
Have you ever used a specific app, tool, or platform to facilitate initial interactions? (Yes/No) If yes specify in next question

24 responses



If yes, to previous question, specify here

11 responses

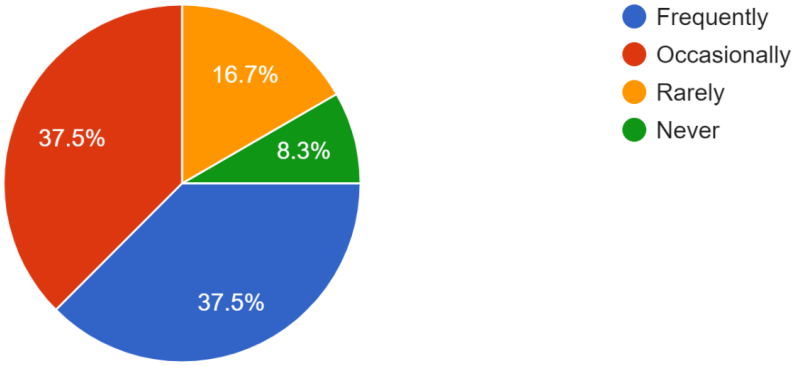


Main apps used for Initial interactions:

- Dating apps
  - (Tinder, Bumble/Bumble BFF, Hinge)
- Linkedin
- Instagram

How frequently do you participate in networking events or social gatherings to initiate and develop relationships? (Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, Never)

24 responses

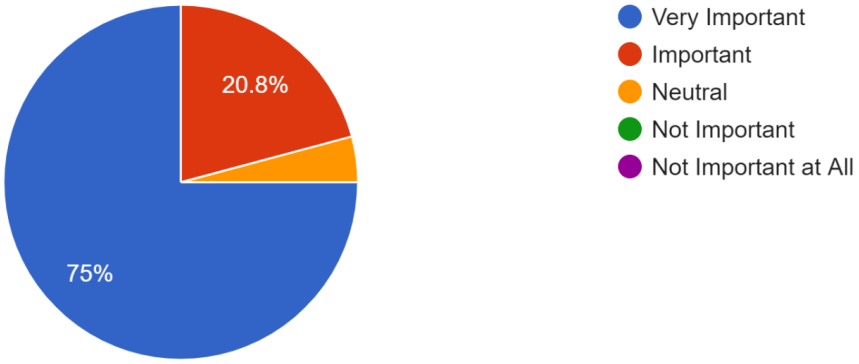


Most people participate in networking events and social gatherings

How does one continue to develop a genuine relationship after the events/gatherings ?

How important is active listening in your initial interactions to you? (Very Important, Important, Neutral, Not Important, Not Important at All)

24 responses



ACTIVE LISTENING IS QUITE IMPORTANT

How does one achieve active listening ?

Can you share a memorable experience from a past initial interaction (e.g., business coffee chat, first date) ? What made it memorable, and what did you learn from it?

- A date, I was able to connect with the person emotionally which made it memorable
- I forgot my laptop charger once before an exam and my laptop was about to die. Someone let me borrow their charging cable so that I could complete my exam.
- A memorable experience was a mock interview someone provided me. What made it memorable is that I found that person very inspiring, they provided one of the most valuable mock interviews I've had and this was the initial interaction that led to multiple more mock interview that strengthened my skills
- I had a great experience going on a coffee date with a person I cold emailed during the pandemic. I was interested in pivoting in my career and she was gracious enough to set time aside during her day to meet with me. What made it memorable was how opened, engaged and curious she was throughout our initial conversation. After our meeting, she periodically reached out to me to inquire about my career. Years later, this resulted in us working at the same company. This taught me a lot about how to make a lasting impression on someone and how to foster authenticity amongst strangers.
- First date was memorable because my date had personalized the experience based on what he learnt about me down from the activity to location and food. I learnt that it's important to be intentional to make a strong first impression.
- I once went on a date with someone where we met by Harborfrount, walked to Dinner, walked to ice cream afterwards.
- What made it memorable was that we went to different locations over the course of the date, a mix of outdoors and indoors activity.
- Most importantly the conversation and energy was really positive and fun.
- We talked about a mix of light and fun topics as well as deep topics.
- I made a new friend at this party last weekend. We bonded over a drinking game, but then ended up having a good conversation about life and work and stuff after. He seemed like a good guy!
- A friend once told me that having no insurance is like raw dogging life and we laughed about it
- First date that last for almost 24hrs (no sex) but ended up doing mini road trip in a blizzard
- On the first date I went to karaoke and we got to see each other in a fun and relaxed environment.
- Being physically active

- Met a friend from LinkedIn - connected based on shared interests and common backgrounds
- First dates are always a memorable time especially if it doesn't work out you still get to hear someone's life story and a bit about someone who was a stranger initially
- When I met my girlfriend at a bar and we spoke outside for almost an hour about so many topics.
- My now friend, came over from a different table asked if we were finishing our pizza slice and then proceeded to take it before we could say no. To clarify it was a school event, so all the pizza was free. But my outrage was real.
- Lunch break with colleagues, it was unexpected, relaxing and a nice bonding session for the team.
- They were invested in hearing my story
- The first day of highschool. What made it memorable was the seeing the diversity in a catholic school.
- **The thing that stood out to me was not knowing the right questions to ask at first.**
- Had a nice chat about the future and health goals. This was special because I learnt about what it takes to have a healthy mind and body and shared a nice coffee with a good friend :)
- Finding common ground
- How freely and proudly they spoke about God

Here's a summary of the key themes and insights from the responses:

Professional Interactions: Positive client meetings.

Emotional Connection:

- Memorable date where emotional connection played a key role.
- A meaningful experience during a coffee date that led to a lasting professional connection.

Personalized Experiences:

- Memorable first date with personalized activities, locations, and food.
- A memorable date involving a mix of outdoor and indoor activities, positive energy, and diverse conversations.

Friendships and Networking:

- Forming connections through shared interests and common backgrounds.
- Bonding over a drinking game, leading to a good conversation about life and work.

Unexpected and Fun Moments:

- Unexpected interactions like sharing pizza at a school event.
- Positive experiences during lunch breaks with colleagues, unexpected and relaxing bonding sessions.

Learning Moments:

- Learning about making a lasting impression and fostering authenticity.
- Learning about having a healthy mind and body through a chat about future health goals.

Spirituality and Values: Positive experiences involving discussions about God and values.

Were there specific challenges you encountered during past initial interactions, (e.g., business coffee chat, first date) and how did you navigate these challenges?

- I broke the ice and discussed issues that may be arising for them and provided solutions
- I lack social cues, speaking to more people helps me overcome this problem
- Chats virtually on slack are pretty nice to be honest. I remain low key as its a remote role.
- Finding the same “vibe” had the other person, example how formal or how casual we should treat the interaction in a coffee chat
- I think the challenges I have encountered when meeting someone new for the first time are universal; stilted conversations, overcoming shyness, f and struggling to keep the dialogue flowing. The best way to navigate these challenges in my opinion is to preemptively think of questions you can ask throughout so you are prepared to fill in awkward silences.
- Challenges in past interactions included actually following up and establishing a timeline/day/time to meet. Navigated this by communicating openly and expressing interest to determine if it’s mutual.

- Yes, initial awkwardness, running out of things to talk about, sometimes people are uncomfortable with silence but sometimes it can be good.
- Usually I'm fine with making conversation with new people but I do struggle with that in dating situation because I guess I'm trying really hard to impress the person but then I usually try and keep the same mindset as any other interaction I would have to overcome the anxiousness
- Creating convo, and maintaining a connection. I overcame there's problems via trial and error and constant follow up
- Planning and then winging it when the plan falls apart
- When talking with coworkers for the first time. There's sometimes the issue of connecting further than just beyond work related issues. Especially if you do not have a lot of things in common
- I talk really fast so I started to slow down
- being left on read
- Coworkers outside of the office have a hard time disassociating themselves from their work and personal lives
- I get bored incredibly easily. So if I'm not in the mood to cause trouble, I'm not in the mood to make friends.
- Had a bit of a hassle getting through the menu to understand what I actually wanted to eat.
- No personal connection to feel each others personality
- Awkward silences in between conversations and not knowing what to say after.
- Searching for common interest, passion

Here's a summary of the key themes and insights:

Communication Challenges:

- Overcoming challenges like initial awkwardness, running out of things to talk about, and navigating uncomfortable silences.
- Breaking the ice by discussing potential issues and providing solutions.

Social Cues and Networking Challenges:

- Addressing challenges related to lacking social cues and navigating interactions in virtual or remote settings.
- Navigating interactions with coworkers, especially when trying to connect beyond work-related issues.

Preparation and Follow-up:

- Preparing for conversations by thinking of preemptive questions.
- Overcoming challenges in follow-up and scheduling by communicating openly and expressing mutual interest.

Dating Challenges:

- Struggling with conversation and anxiousness in dating situations.
- Overcoming challenges by maintaining the same mindset as any other interaction.

Personal Preferences and Boredom:

- Challenges related to personal preferences, including getting bored easily.
- Addressing issues when coworkers have a hard time disassociating work and personal lives.

Unexpected Challenges: Dealing with unexpected challenges, like being left on read or navigating unexpected situations.

Communication Style: Adjusting communication style, such as speaking slower to avoid talking too fast.

Finding Common Interests: Challenges in finding common interests and passions.

Can you provide examples of strategies or approaches you use to establish a connection with someone you're meeting for the first time?

- Make the conversation about them and get to know as much as you can about them. Find similarities
- I always ask open-end questions and try to develop a relationship
- Not sure.
- I just try to be calm. I ask them about themselves. Then I try to ask follow up questions based on what they said and provide my own commentary. If we’re talking and I can tell they resonate with a certain topic I will expand on that.
- I look into them ahead of time to find points of commonality and think of questions I can ask them ahead of time (sometimes the list is mental, but sometimes it is written).
- Establish connection by asking open ended questions to learn more about them. Interacting in group settings/mutual connections to help break the ice and

discover mutual interests. Being friendly and approachable. Having a plan for the first planned meeting so it feels more comfortable.
- I ask lots of questions, do background research on the person, repeat what they say in my head to avoid distraction, picking a quiet place to meet. Get my mind into a state where I convince myself that the person is genuinely interesting.
- I think things like making a light compliment about their outfit is good ice breaker. Asking them about how there day went is a decent question because it can lead to them revealing things they might be doing such as work or school which can lead to another topic to discuss and that way you can try picking up on common topics to continue the conversation
- Compliments all the way
- Confidence, faking it till you make it.
- Try to ask engaging and thought provoking questions and listen to the other person. By relating and being engaged it can foster a relaxed and flowing conversation and interaction
- Being confident

Here's a summary of the key themes and insights:

Making the Conversation About Them:

- Getting to know as much as possible about the other person.
- Asking open-ended questions and finding similarities.

Preparation and Research:

- Conducting background research on the person before the meeting.
- Looking into points of commonality and preparing questions ahead of time.

Engaging Questions and Active Listening:

- Asking engaging and thought-provoking questions.
- Listening intently, letting answers guide the next question.

Confidence and Approachability:

- Projecting confidence, even if it involves "faking it till you make it."
- Making light compliments, asking about their day, and appearing approachable.

Open-mindedness and Genuine Interest:

- Keeping an open mind and being willing to listen to people's stories and advice.
- Asking questions about the other person, demonstrating genuine interest.

Eye Contact and Smiling: Maintaining eye contact, appearing confident, and smiling.

Being an Active Listener: Being the active listener and interjecting when the other person is done talking.

Finding Common Ground: Trying to find something in common and appreciating the uniqueness of the other person.

Connecting Through Social Media: Sharing social media accounts to keep in touch.

Personal Introductions: Introducing oneself with a smile.

Being Open and Genuine: Approaching interactions with openness and genuine intent.

Initiating Conversations: Asking what people are currently reading as a conversation starter.

How do you handle situations where an initial interaction didn't lead to the desired outcome in terms of building a relationship?

- Don't force it. Continue moving along organically
- I try to follow up and establish a connection in the second meeting
- I moved on from it with the understanding there are many more people
- I try to reconnect again in case it was a one-off. Otherwise if I determine it’s a poor personality/lifestyle fit I let it go or remain as distant acquaintances.
- I may send a follow up message or just charge it to the game.
- I don’t take it to heart because I know we can’t be friends with everyone we meet and I want genuine relationships so there’s no point in forcing a relationship of any kind if there’s nothing in common between you and the person
- Having grace and move on
- If its important, try again. If not, don't sweat it.

- Depends on the importance of the person. If not that important I'll leave the relationship as is
- I learn and move on
- Deal with it, give it time and patience
- Not everyone in life can be your friend nor will you click with every person you come across. When this happens, it's best to be polite always, but understand they may not be there in the future. Once you accept that, you won't feel as if you're missing out but more that now there's another opportunity elsewhere to develop a relationship.
- In the case of romantic relationships, I take time to reflect. Usually binge a series, read 2 books, or wait 2 months, depending on which comes first, and try to re-center myself in a routine and do things solo that I really enjoy. Networking: idgaf.
- Give a benefit of doubt and shift focus if a pattern of disinterest is shown.
- Just knowing that not all would lead to that helps.
- Reflect on your role, be patient, communicate openly, listen active, and be adaptive. Respect boundaries and be prepared to move on if necessary.
- I did nothing after
- Take it for what it's worth and move on
- LET THE RELATIONSHIP FIZZLE OUT NATURALLY NO MORE CONTACT

Can you share any insights or advice for someone looking to improve their ability to develop and maintain relationships during initial interactions?

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- Compliments all the way
- Confidence, faking it till you make it.
- Try to ask engaging and thought provoking questions and listen to the other person. By relating and being engaged it can foster a relaxed and flowing conversation and interaction
- Being confident
- None come to mind
- share social media accounts that way you can keep in touch
- Keeping an open mind and willing to listen to peoples stories/advice
- Always ask them questions about themselves and make sure you let them know you’re genuinely interested. Then, link it to yourself and begin to find more things in common. Like minds like to gel together by nature, so within a matter of minutes you are bonding with someone who you’ve never met before.
- Ask questions, listen for the answer (not just to speak), let the answer guide your next question. Make a slightly self-deprecating joke!
- Maintain reasonable amount of eye contact, appear confident even if you don't feel like it. Smile.
- Listen intently, find interests that overlap,
- Introducing yourself with a smile
- Tend to want to be the active listener and only interject when they're done talking.
- Try to find something in common, if you can't just sit back and see how the different and awesome the other person! Learn something new about someone new !
- I usually just ask what people are currently reading starts the convo

Here's a summary of the key themes and advice:

Listening and Being Selfless: Be selfless, talk to people with similar hobbies, make things about them, and be a good listener.

Authenticity and Open-mindedness: Be your authentic self, be open-minded, be present, and listen. This creates a comfortable and heard environment for both parties.

Approach with a Positive Mindset: Approach interactions with the mindset that everyone is open to developing a relationship. Recognize that not every relationship is for everyone.

Trial and Error: Embrace trial and error. The more you meet people and experience failures, the more you'll learn how to foster relationships.

Straightforwardness and Resilience: Be straightforward and not easily offended.

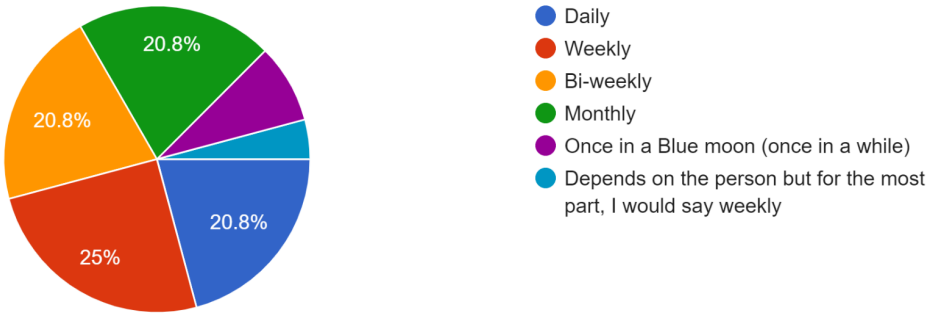
Intentionality and Relationship Depth:

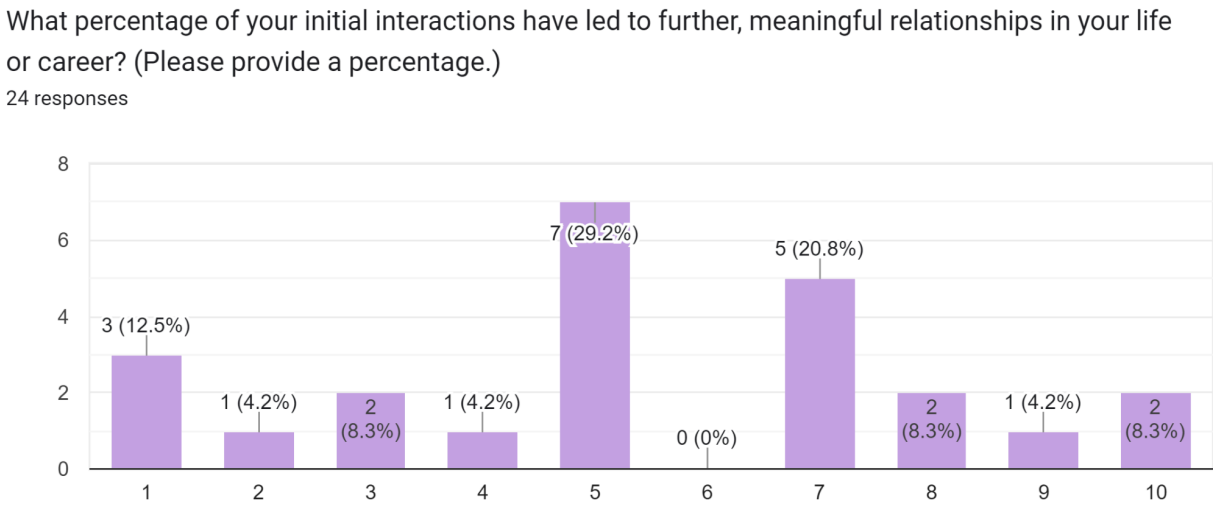
- Determine the depth of the relationship you want and act accordingly. Be intentional, available, and vulnerable based on your desired level of closeness.
- Convince yourself that the person you are building a relationship with has good intent and is trying their best.
- Meeting in neutral scenarios and being intentional are key.

Expressing Yourself and Overcoming Fear: Don't be afraid to communicate, right or wrong. Expression is important. Overcome fear as it's natural but shouldn't control you.

2. Continual interactions

How often do you continually interact with people that you would like to develop more genuine relationships with interactions in your personal an...y, Weekly, Bi-weekly, Monthly, Once in a Blue moon)
24 responses





How do you approach follow-up or maintaining relationships after the initial interaction? Are there specific practices or methods you find effective?

- A simple text to check in would suffice
- I just let them know that I enjoyed my first interaction and try to schedule a second meeting
- Keeping in touch as much for major life events.
- If it's a coffee chat I might message a follow-up if it's a date I will always message afterwards IF I want to continue things, if it a a friendship I follow up asking to hangout
- I think the best way to ensure there is a second meeting is to raise the possibility during the initial interaction so the expectation is set. When that is the case, the expectation is already set and it leads to more chances of following through.
- I find it helpful to add reminders in my calendar to check in on certain relationships after a certain amount of time (eg. 1-2 months) or after a specific milestone event they mentioned (eg. Upcoming travel plans)
- If I find an article, video, opportunity that they find interesting I will send it to them.
- I think it depends on what kind of interaction it was. Usually I don't reach out right away or not at least until I need to. Such as, if I go on a first date and it went well, I'll wait at least a day to text back and see if we can go out again. With new friendship, probably not until the next time I want to make plans to meet up
- Commenting on people's post and remembering their birthdays
- Differs between each person in the relationship in my opinion.

- Active communication whether it be bi weekly or monthly
- Being yourself so you don’t give a false sense of your personality
- Messaging on different social media applications, meeting up for food or drinks, going to events together, talking about common hobbies and interests.
- Networking: send a thank you email, highlighting discussion points 24 hours after. Include a reason why you might reach out in the future to continue the conversation.
- Friendships: ask to grab their number! Invite em to a movie or other friend gathering! See if they'd be interested in starting a new activity/attending an event you'd been curious about. (Love neighborhood exploring!!)
- Messages based on mutual interests
- Be proactive and intentional in your efforts to maintain the relationship. Engage in shared interest, adapt to changes, and periodically check in.
- I typically go with the flow
- I don't have a specific practice but if there is something we both like and want to do, I find a way to make it happen with that other person. I like to think of it as go getting.
- Reaching out, being reliable
- ASK TO HANG OUT AGAIN IN A MORE CASUAL SETTING LIKE TAKING A WALK GOING TO A PARK ETC

Here's a summary of the key themes and insights:

Simple and Direct Communication:

- Sending a simple text to check in.
- Expressing enjoyment of the first interaction and scheduling a second meeting.

Immediate Follow-up: Messaging a follow-up immediately after a coffee chat or a date, expressing the desire to continue the relationship.

Setting Expectations: Raising the possibility of a second meeting during the initial interaction to set expectations.

Calendar Reminders: Adding reminders in the calendar to check in on relationships after a certain time or milestone event.

Sharing Content of Interest: Sending articles, videos, or opportunities that may interest the other person.

Commenting and Social Media Engagement:

- Commenting on posts and remembering birthdays.
- Connecting via social media and engaging with posts.

Varied Communication Frequency: Active communication, whether bi-weekly or monthly.

Networking Practices:

- Sending a thank-you email after networking, highlighting discussion points.
- Asking to grab their number, inviting them to events, and expressing interest in shared activities.

Adaptability and Proactivity: Being proactive and intentional in maintaining relationships.

Organizing Casual Hangouts: Asking to hang out again in a more casual setting like taking a walk or going to a park.

What personal qualities or characteristics do you believe are essential for successful relationship-building during initial interactions?

- Be selfless, loyal and not making the conversation all about you.
- Being kind, empathetic an thoughtful.
- Non judgmental and open minded
- Candor, curiosity, good humor and authenticity
- Intentionality, Communication, Transparency, Authenticity, Interest,
- Love and empathy.
- I think being open minded is important. Being respectful and empathetic and overall being genuine. Also being honest!
- Consistent communication and mutual support
- Be straightforward.
- Listening, understanding, and participating in thought and communication.
- Being nice and consistent
- consistency and sharing common interests
- Confidence, respect, honesty, a good sense of humor and being genuine.
- Open Mindedness (Don't yuck people's yums), Humor, Humility, and Vulnerability (What's the point if you don't share? Who wants to talk to a wall?)
- Mutual interests, great attitudes

- Empathy, active listening, authenticity, and respect. Patience, adaptability, and kindness are also key. Effective communication, openness, and self-awareness play a crucial role in connecting with others.
- Empathy and honesty. Its always good to listen to someone from their point of view and not just yours. Honesty is key here though, be honest to who you are as genuine relationships will happen.
- Communication skills and honesty
- HONESTY, BEING REALISTIC, HAVING GOOD MORALS, NOT BEING DELUSIONAL, BEING FUNNY AND WITTY, HAVING HOBBIES YOU CAN SHAREHere's a summary of the key themes from the responses:

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Empathy and Open-mindedness:

- Being open-minded, empathetic, and not judgmental.
- Listening actively and understanding others' perspectives.

Authenticity and Honesty:

- Emphasizing authenticity, candor, and honesty.
- Being genuine and straightforward in communication.

Communication and Transparency:

- Consistent communication, mutual support, and transparency.
- Effective communication, openness, and self-awareness.

Kindness and Respect:

- Demonstrating kindness, respect, and consistent niceness.
- Mutual respect and sharing common interests.

Other Personal Qualities:

- Having a good sense of humor, humility, and vulnerability.
- Patience, adaptability, and having good morals.
- Confidence, humor, and being realistic.
- Sharing mutual interests and maintaining a great attitude.
- Having hobbies that can be shared.

E. Major Findings

Survey participant interviews were more of qualitative conversations some interesting findings include:

- Intentionality and effort for relationships being highly important
- There was an even split between personal romantic relationships vs professional relationships
- It is challenging to develop relations while working remotely
- Dating apps and Linkedn in the major methods for initial interactions
- Continual interactions need some more work
- Males initiate the initial interactions ex. first date (data may be biased)