

## New Beginnings, New Bonds

By Elizabeth Conroy



**“YOU ARE NOT ALONE, AND YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BEAR THAT FEELING ON YOUR OWN.”**

Making friends in your freshman year of college is not an easy task. At first, it may seem impossible, but with the right tips and tricks anything is possible. You are surrounded by new places, new people, and you are now set on a whole new journey. The people you meet and the experiences you have along the way are the best parts, so choosing wisely is important. Creating long lasting bonds during your freshman year of college is crucial for personal growth and academic success, as those bonds foster a sense of belonging, provide emotional support, and will help you navigate the challenges of transitioning to college.

Where do I even begin? The hardest part of making friends in a new environment is simply starting, but when you finally put yourself out there, it's smooth sailing. "My biggest tip for incoming freshman is to go to campus/ RA held events. There is so much to do on this beautiful campus, take advantage of it!" (Professor Pemberton). At Loyola, an event or activity takes place at all times of the day. Going to these events is the perfect opportunity to meet new people and form new bonds. The Bridge, an app used by Loyola students, shows all events held by different clubs and departments—you can register for them [here](#). Taking that first step outside of your comfort zone and trying something you've never done before is so important in a new setting.

### FEELING HOMESICK?



Feeling homesick is very normal! "You are not alone, and you do not have to bear that feeling on your own" (Mariana). You are surrounded by people who have the same feelings and are going through the same thing you are. "In fact, studies have shown that 70 percent of first-year students experience homesick symptoms" ([Zielinski](#)). Do not be afraid to reach out to other students, faculty, or staff. Having conversations about your homesick feelings with fellow classmates and staff allows you to form a deeper connection. Having that common feeling is super useful and you should take full advantage of it.

Use your resources! [The Counseling Center](#) and other resources can sound scary and fears of reliance on these resources are common. But these resources are here for your use and betterment. They offer support and help with anything you are struggling with. By taking advantage of these resources, you will learn the different ways to deal with your emotions and you will no longer need to rely on them.

Call your mom! Feeling homesick is a very normal, and a common feeling when you first arrive on campus. It may sound obvious, but it is so important to call and check in with your family members and close friends from home. Being able to have a small touch of home in your weekly schedule makes the transition go a lot smoother.



## IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS!

A small gesture goes a long way! "Something small, like a soft smile can change someone's day" (Luis). When first meeting someone, simple compliments and kind acts are the perfect way to break the ice. Showing the other person that you are kind and approachable can help them be more open and could be the start of a wonderful friendship. Do not be afraid to start the conversation because more times than not, that person wanted to start a conversation with you, too. Compliments are an easy way to find common ground with another person and open many doors for other types of conversations. I know it might seem banal, but small talk is your best friend. Easing into a conversation with rather ordinary topics is key to deepening a bond with someone and being able to beef up your discussions.

Empathy is fundamental in creating a lasting bond with another person. In every friendship or relationship, you have in your life, you will not always see eye to eye on everything. "Ask questions, listen, and understand" (Professor Pemberton). When you disagree with someone, it is better to listen and understand their point of view rather than getting angry and thinking differently of them. College is a big and diverse institution, and you are going to meet people of all kinds. It is important to have empathy and compassion for others when disagreeing on something and being able to move forward in friendship with a clear understanding of one another. The best tip I can give to you is the practice of being kind and respectful of others and their lifestyles. Fostering hatred for people who are different from you will get you nowhere in friendship making. The privilege to be unique and still live in harmony with everyone is so valuable and you should cherish it.

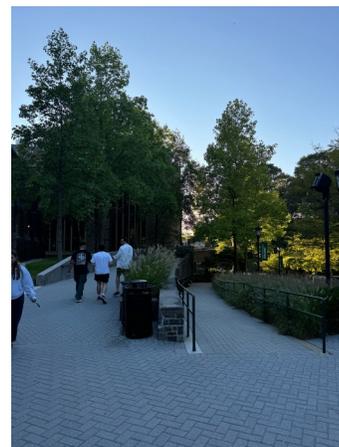
## TRUST THE PROCESS!

Get your friend group and schoolwork to balance! "Gaining good time management skills has been my biggest help throughout college" (Madeline). The skill of balancing your friend life with your academic life is not an easy feat, but with all the available resources and help offered throughout campus, it is easily attainable. Using calendars, agendas, and to-do lists to map out your assignments and exams is the best way to ensure academic success and low stress levels. Letting your work pile up with no real plan of action causes stressful cramming and no time for social interaction. It is hard to find the time to meet new people and see different places when you are in a constant cram with schoolwork. Find the schedule and plan that works best for you, and you will be able to have a fun, fruitful, and friend-filled freshman year! Trust the process! Once you get into the flow of going to class, studying, and hanging out with friends, you will be relaxed and content. One way to include making time for friends into your flow is by joining the clubs offered on campus. There is a club fair held at the beginning of the year in the quad. I highly recommend attending this fair and signing up for any of the clubs that pique your interest. You will be put on the club's email list and will start receiving emails for when the club is holding meetings and events. This is an amazing way to add social time to your calendar and make new friends. As I stated earlier, The Bridge is also a great way to learn about and join clubs if you are unable to attend the club fair. Try something new! When meeting so many new faces, it may be hard to know and see the signs of a true friendship, so you want to have many opportunities.

"You can tell when it is a true friendship when you find yourself in a natural comfortable state. You don't feel like you're grasping at straws to find things in com-



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mon or deepen the conversation. You can be 100% yourself and never feel the need to fake anything" (Luis). You should never feel obligated to stay in a place where you feel uncomfortable or disassociated. A true friendship will bring out the best side of you. The side of you that feels 100% natural and calm. A real friendship will bring you a great sense of joy and peace. Being able to pick out these signs in yourself and in friendships is crucial when forming bonds with others. Don't ever stay somewhere you feel masked or unsafe.

## FINAL THOUGHTS!

Making friends during your freshman year of college can seem daunting, but with the right approach, it becomes an exciting and fulfilling experience. By taking advantage of campus events, being open and empathetic, and practicing small acts of kindness, you can create genuine connections that will enhance your college journey. Remember, it's important to balance academics and friendships, as this balance will help reduce stress and make room for meaningful bonds. Most importantly, trust the process; authentic friendships will naturally develop when you remain true to yourself and stay open to new experiences. Friendships and lifelong bonds do not happen instantaneously. They take time and effort to build. With that time, you'll find that the connections you form during your freshman year will not only provide emotional support but will also contribute to your personal growth and success throughout college.



**BE  
YOURSELF!**

