

MAKE NEW FRIENDS

Being grown up doesn't mean you can't make new friends – you just have to be more creative about it. Here's how:

The first rule of being liked is liking other people. The trick to this is very simple – listen to what they have to say. Instead of nervously babbling or retreating into yourself when you first meet someone, ask them simple questions and show an interest in their answers.

Next, focus on how you can benefit others and they will be drawn to you. Understanding what you bring to the world will put you in the right frame of mind to seize every people-meeting opportunity that comes your way.

To keep your social circle strong, send a catch-up email to all the people you haven't contacted in the last six months, just to say, 'Hello. How are you?'

Join a social group that interests you, and go to the events – you won't meet new people sitting at home wishing for it. Look into online social networks, such as Facebook, where you can meet up with old friends and make new ones. Finally, arrange a get-together for all your current friends, and ask them to bring someone new along.

By Peta Heskell, founder of the Attraction Academy

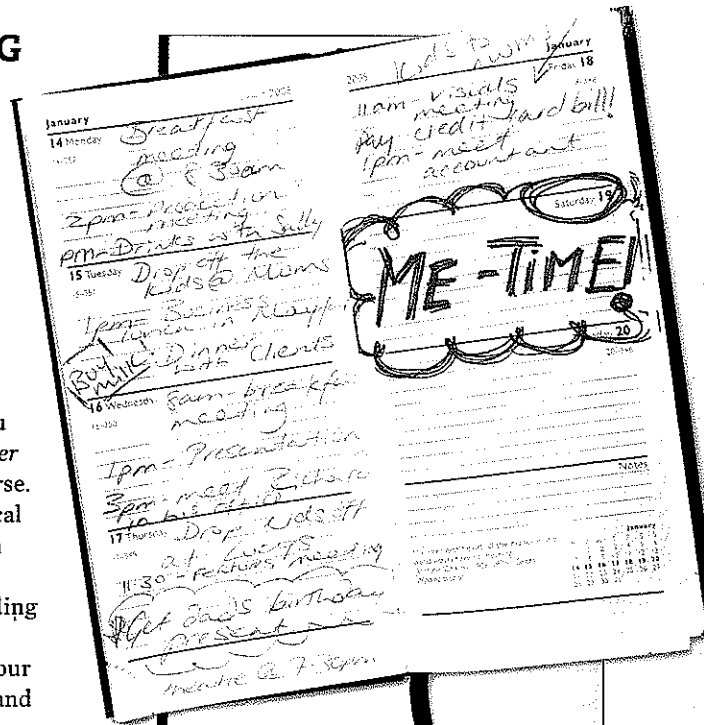
GIVE SOMETHING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Volunteering not only changes the world for the better, it can change your life for the better, too. A survey by Reed Executive found that 73 per cent of employers would choose a candidate with volunteering experience over one without.

Volunteering also makes you healthier. In *The Healing Power of Doing Good* (£15.99, iUniverse.com), Allan Luks found medical proof that voluntary work can bring fitness-boosting, stress-busting benefits, such as building a stronger immune system.

These days, you can tailor your volunteering to suit your life and the amount of time you have to spare. There are plenty of options, but start by deciding what you want to get out of it – be it meeting people, gaining new skills or just giving something back to a cause you really believe in. Then, go to do-it.org.uk or timebank.org.uk to see what's out there.

By Moira Swinbank, chief executive of TimeBank ▶



FEEL LESS STRESSED

Exercise, diet and sleep are all stress-busting tools; another important one is breathing. Stress is often caused by anticipatory anxiety; mindful breathing grounds you in the present moment, freeing you from worrying about the future.

Take three minutes to listen to your breath. Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice how your breath feels, where you first feel it, how it changes as it enters and leaves your body. Do this two or three times a day and notice the difference as your body relaxes, your heartbeat slows, brain activity quietsens and a sense of well-being hits you.

Also, acknowledge that you're trying to do too much. Remind yourself that, thankfully, perfection does not exist, and doing your best will always be good enough.

Taking time for you isn't selfish, it's essential. Choose something that you love and schedule it in your diary as a priority. This can be especially difficult when you already have 1,001 things to think about, but the reality is that time devoted to nurturing and restoring yourself will leave you feeling re-energised and resourceful.

By Dr Cecilia d'Felice, chartered clinical psychologist

