

Moving to a New City? Here Are 8 Tips for Building a Social Life from Scratch

Praxis Weekend brought together some of the brightest young people I know in one city for a few glorious days. This talk was one of the highlights of the weekend for me. Praxis alumnus and GrowthLion Media CEO Evan Le gave his breakdown of how to build a social life from scratch when you move to a new city. Here are his points, paraphrased with some additional mixed-in commentary from yours truly.

1. Stop assuming there are “unapproachable” people.

You probably tend to create “mini-crushes” in our head when you see someone you want to get to know. These idealizations, like “crushes,” are often based on immediate first impressions and low self-esteem. The longer you muse on the crush instead of acting on it, the more unapproachable the person seems.

The reality is that people are just people. Often the person who looks busy is just trying to fill up dead space and would *love* for someone to talk to them. Assume nothing. Test everything.

2. Small talk is just a start.

Small talk gets a bad rap, but it’s really OK for you to use it. But it’s just a start. Find pivot points in any small talk discussion that can get you to a bigger and more interesting field of discussion.

The best ways to turn small talk into great conversation are to listen well and to ask great questions. These are inseparable. A good flow to use for conversation is **Question (You Ask) > Listening to Answer > Brief Response > Another Question (You Ask)**. Follow that flow and you’ll never run out of things to talk about, if the person is interested and interesting enough to befriend.

3. Check your limiting scripts at the door.

You have things you tell yourself that keep you from getting the social life you want:

It’s creepy to approach a girl/guy I don’t know.

I’m awkward/out of my league/out of place here.

I’m just some random kid to him/her.

My time is too valuable to engage with this person.

They already have friends – they don't need another one.

Here's the thing: if you label yourself with these, you are automatically labelling others – as “better than you,” “cold,” “unavailable,” “judgmental,” etc. Those labels are based on zero information. For that reason, you must put your self-conceptions and limiting scripts in their place.

4. Always be giving.

This one is a no-brainer. To get friends, you need to be a friend. To be a good friend, learn how to give well. Get to know what the people around you like and need. Then rise to meet those needs.

Make introductions for people who should know each other. Give good advice and recommendations as you come to know life and your city more. Offer your help to people who need to move furniture, bring cookies to your next-door neighbor, bring donuts to church. Do whatever you can to become a giver and become known as a giver. That generosity will come back around to you in good ways.

5. Make it easy.

Maybe one of the reasons you don't get a lot of social interaction is that everyone else has the same social fears you do. Someone has to be the first to break the ice. If you really want to have a thriving social network, that person has to be you.

Be the first person to ask a question or open a conversation. Be the person who sets strangers at ease. Be the one to create social events. Be the person who invites other people out. People will be grateful to you for having the courage to make things happen socially.

6. No one gives a s%^&.

People are not silently judging you at all times. There is not some high gated wall you have to scale to have a social life, or some club to which you must be invited. Only a few scattered meanies will be mad at you for starting up a conversation with them. So get out of your own head. People care about meaningful, positive, and valuable interactions, and little else really matters beside that.

If you really want to get a lot out of an interaction with a stranger (or even a long-time friend), you should be focusing so much on the other person that you aren't even conscious of yourself. Ironically, that selflessness will give you much more selfish enjoyment in the

long term.

7. Build a social activity funnel.

If you want to have a great social life, you need to have a great social system. Think like a marketer or salesperson. You need to build a “social funnel” that is always working to generate new social opportunities (your “leads”), lure them into your social web (“capturing leads”), sift out the good from the bad (“qualifying” your leads), and convert the good into great events and friendships (“conversion, making the sale”).

Here’s what a good social funnel might look like:

A. Hunt for new social opportunities (Lead generation): Attend a meetup in town with people who have similar interests and opportunities. Find one person and try to get to know them over the course of the event.

B. Set up another social interaction (Lead capture): At the end of the meetup, you should have a solid acquaintance. Now it’s time to propose that you hang out elsewhere. Have a good idea in mind of where you will go and what you will do. Use that next, more direct social interaction to build a relationship outside of the meetup alone.

C. Repeat and create new social interactions (Lead nurture): Wash, rinse, and repeat. Once you build your social activity funnel, follow it religiously. But don’t forget to nurture your existing friendships, too. If you’re lucky, you’ve found another person who is as nerdy about personal development as you are. Schedule 30 minutes every week where you can meet and call each other on your mutual bullshit. Iron sharpens iron, and you will sharpen each other for work, romance, social life, and internal life.

8. Become a regular/find your third place.

You probably already have at least two places that you’ll be spending your time when you move to a new city: home and work. If you want to have any kind of good social life, you’ll need to step out of the work-home circuit and find your third place.

Maybe it’s the gym. Maybe it’s a bar. Maybe it’s a local coffee shop. Ideally, it’s a place you can visit almost every day as part of your regular routine. Switch it up between daytime and nightlife, but go into your third place with the intention of being a valuable, consistent community member/customer, etc. Get to know the staff, tip generously and obviously, bring guests, and provide value. You’ll be loved for it, and you’ll have no problem becoming king or queen of the scene.