

Reflect On Your Friendships

Sustainable social happiness requires deliberate actions to create, strengthen or dissolve friendships based on your needs.

Spending time to look at your “Circle of Friends” can provide a great visual when making decisions and plans for your friendships. This circle can also be helpful in problem-solving how to dissolve friendships that are harmful or no longer work for you. Let’s take a closer look at the “Circle of Friends” and how people can move in and out of the circles.

Circle A

This is the center ring and includes your closest friends and family. It is the smallest circle and includes the least number of people. These are individuals that **you can be your truest self with** including a spouse or partner, your kids, parents or your closest relative and friends.

Circle B

The next circle includes other close friends and family who are **important to your life** but who you may not show all sides of yourself to.

Circle C

The next circle includes your casual friends, work friends, and other people in your social circle that you like but with whom you are **not super-close**. This includes people who are friends of friends with whom you share similar social circles, but whom you do not spend time on your own.

Circle D

The final circle includes relationships that are formed through **paid relationships**. Examples of people in this circle are service providers like a doctor, dentist, window cleaner, hairdresser, yoga instructor or taxi driver.

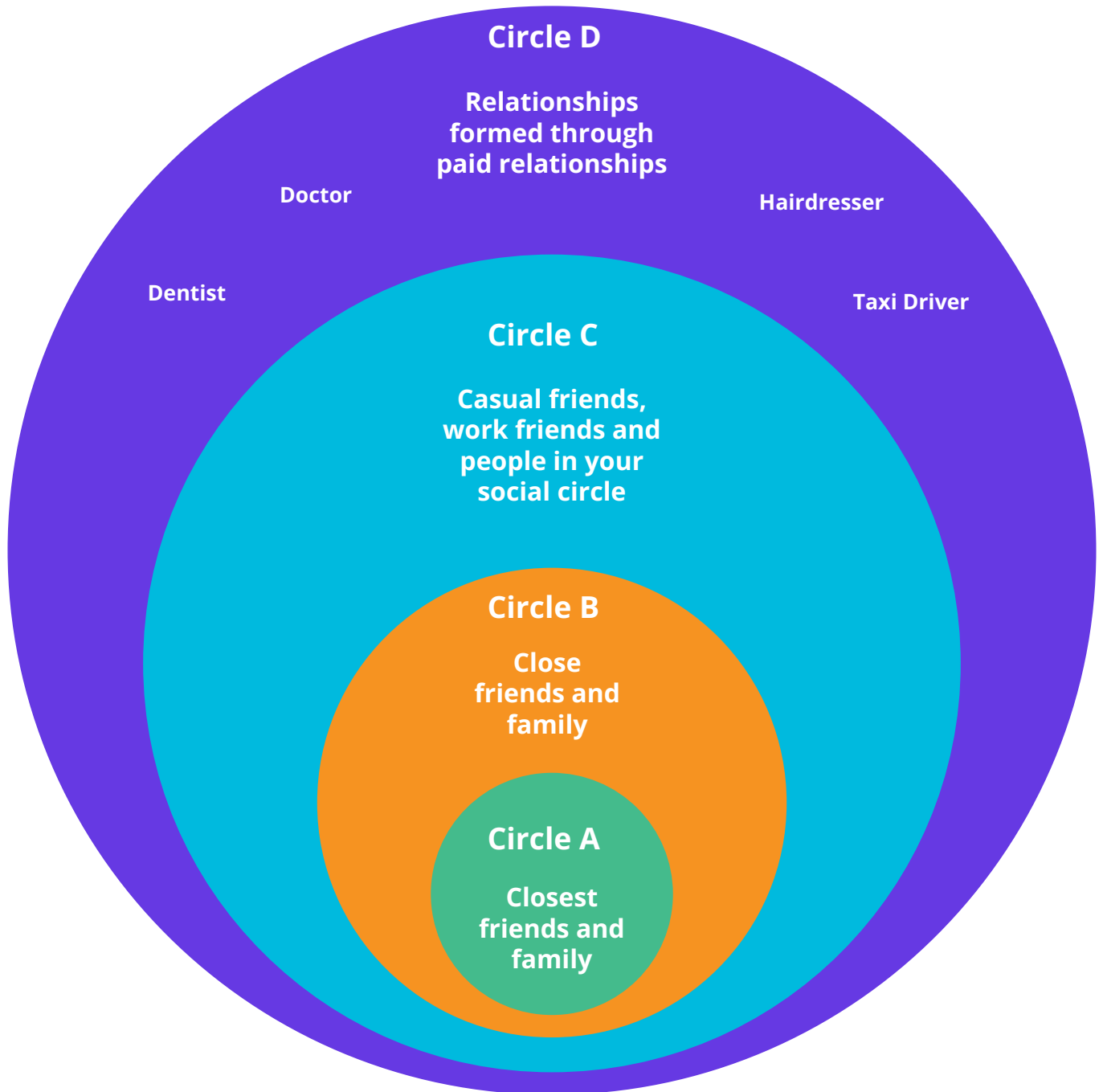
Keep In Mind That Things Change

People are not set in any given circle. People move in and out of our circles naturally as we meet new people, go through life changes (like changing jobs or having kids), lose track of friends, or as relationships become strained through the tension of physical distance.

For example, we may have a work friend or casual acquaintance that we decide to build a strong friendship with or perhaps we fall in love and marry someone we met initially in Circle D. The people in our lives naturally move in and out of the different circles. This can happen coincidentally or with intention.



5 Tips to Strengthen Friendships (cont.)



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Here's A Related Practice:

Are you interested in meeting new friends or strengthening your current friendships? If you said yes, you are not alone.

According to the American Psychological Association, people's close / personal and friendship networks (Circles A and B) have shrunk over the last 35 years.

Below are some tips to create new friendships or strengthen existing ones.

- 1. Start by looking inward.** Think about and pursue your personal interest to meet like-minded people. For example, join a book club, get back to playing volleyball, or take a wine tasting class.
- 2. Treat friendship like dating.** When dating, we tend to meet people in small bursts, evaluate the experience, then increase our interactions over time. Think about friendships in the same way. Invite someone to a group event, then coffee, then something where you can spend longer quality time to build the relationship.
- 3. Prioritize your friendships.** Set aside time in your calendar to connect with your friends in person or over a video call. When important things happen in their lives, reach out to celebrate with them or offer your support.
- 4. Be vulnerable.** Once you have established a strong friendship, open up a bit when you feel comfortable and have built trust in your friendship.
- 5. Be the type of friend that you want.** Are you looking for a friend that is willing to provide advice and be there for you in your time of need? Are you looking for a friend that will remember important events in your life? As you think through what is important to you in a friend, think also about ways that YOU can offer these attributes to other people (e.g., sharing advice, remembering important events, offering a shoulder to cry on, etc.)



References: Written by the mental health experts at Rethink First.

