

making Friends

Jamie always had a crowd around her. She wasn't especially knock-out gorgeous. She usually had a couple of zits, and she wasn't exceptionally good at sports.

But she was one of the most popular students at school. Everyone loved her!

Jamie was like a magnet. Wherever she went, someone wanted to be with her. It wasn't unusual for Jamie to be seen listening to one of the football players share a problem with her, or to see her showing a new student how to get to the biology lab.

Why? What was it about Jamie that made everyone notice her? If her looks and her talents weren't anything to brag about, what *did* she have going for her? Here it is—short and simple—Jamie had learned the secret of being popular. She knew how to make friends and keep them.

You already know this book is about helping your friends who are struggling with hurt, confusion and a variety of problems. But guess what? In order for you to be a helping friend, you first have to *have* friends and be the kind of friend others *want* in their lives.

So before we actually get into how you can *help* your friends, let's first take a peek at how you *get* friends and *become* a friend, okay?

(This next stuff is going to be pretty basic. In fact, you may already know it all and can help me write my next book. If you don't need this part, feel free to totally skip it and flip to the very end of this section—page 17.)

the secret

Jamie's secret to popularity really isn't something a rocket scientist has to figure out. It's actually very basic:

JAMIE WAS NICE TO EVERYONE!

Wait a sec, you're thinking. That's too easy. There's gotta be more to popularity than that!

Yeah, there are a few more strategies we'll talk about in a few seconds, but the biggest secret of all—the one thousands of teens try to skip over—is simply being nice to *everyone*.

Jamie was as kind to the new student who had no friends at all as she was the football player. She had friends in the band and friends in drama. She refused to only associate with one group of people. Because she was kind to everyone, people responded by wanting to be around her.

there's more

Okay, as mentioned a few lines earlier, there are some additional strategies that go along with Jamie's big secret of being nice to everyone. Ready to tackle them? Let's take a few minutes on each one.

SENSATIONAL SMILE.

There's something intriguing about someone who smiles a lot, isn't there? We're automatically drawn to someone who's happy. And wearing a smile usually implies that the person behind it is approachable.

If people know you're approachable, they'll start coming to you. And how will they know? Well, you'll make them feel at ease; comfortable. And how does *that* happen? By smiling. A smile is an open invitation to be approached. It says, "You can talk to me. I'll be friendly with you. Really. It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you."

Smiles also convey something else that's really important when making friends. A smiling person insinuates confidence. (That was really a great point, did you get it? Or did you just zoom by it quickly? Well, to make sure you get it, let's go over it again, K?)

Repeat after me:

SMILING INSINUATES CONFIDENCE.

I can already hear your thoughts screaming through the page at me: *But I'm NOT confident, Susie. I feel insecure, and I'm always worried about what I look like and what everyone else is thinking, and—*

Whoa. Go grab some lemonade from the fridge and cool off. I said *insinuates* not *proves*. In other words, a smile *suggests* that you're confident. You don't have to actually *feel* confident to smile. But when you *do*, people will *think* you're confident. Cool, huh? (Watch the lemonade. You're starting to drip.)

But here's something even cooler: The longer you practice smiling—even in intimidating situations—the sooner your smile will catch up with you. In other words, you'll start to believe what the smile stands for.

You'll gain confidence from smiling! No, it won't happen overnight, but it *will* happen. I promise.

Let me introduce you to 16-year-old Jenny. I met Jenny along with 300 other teen girls that I took to Brazil with me on a two-week missions trip. On the final night of the trip, several girls stepped up to the microphone and shared what God had taught them during the past few days.

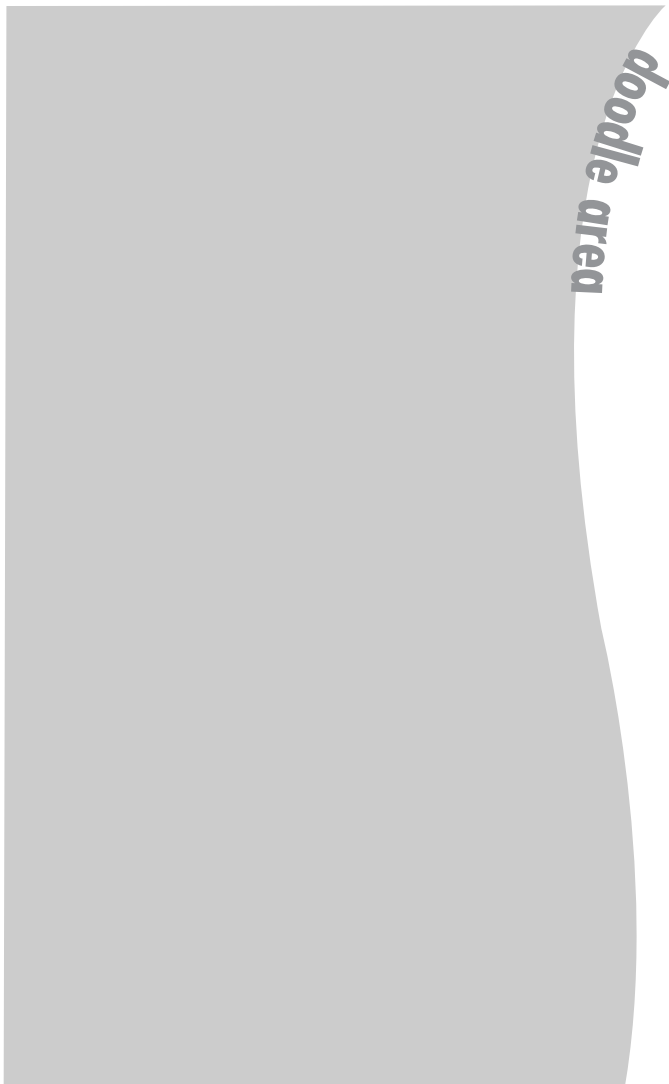
I'll never forget Jenny. Smiling from ear to ear, she shared her story. "When I was 11," she began, "I was in a terrible car accident. My bottom teeth were knocked out—causing my mouth to be disfigured. I struggled a lot with having a low self-esteem, thinking I was ugly. But you know what? God has shown me that I have a beautiful smile! And my smile is something I can give to everyone I meet. Because He can use my smile to minister to others and to encourage those around me, I no longer have to worry about my outer appearance. God is using my smile!"

Wow. Jenny had learned the secret of flashing a sensational smile. And she was right! God was using her smile. Jenny always had a crowd of people around her. She was approachable, easy to talk to, and she genuinely cared about others. Know what else? She was beginning to *feel* the confidence that her smile *suggested*!

"The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his FRIEND"

(Exodus 33:11).

What about you? Will you make a point to start working right now on developing a sensational smile? Just for fun . . . since you've already dripped lemonade all over this page anyway . . . I'll leave some space here for you to doodle on. Know what I want you to doodle? Smiles. Make as many as you want. Big ones. Little ones. Funny ones. Magnetic ones. Create a million smiles right here, and I'll go grab a Cherry 7-Up and meet you on the next page.



there's still more

Let's recap, okay? Jamie was popular because:

1. She was nice to everyone.
2. She smiled a lot.

Ready for the next one? Jamie knew how to talk *and* listen. It wasn't unusual at all to see her listening to someone sharing a problem, but she was also a good conversationalist. In other words, the other person didn't have to do all the talking.

Everyone knows someone who talks all the time. They're not much fun to be around, are they? I once had a friend whom I went out to eat a lot with. She talked all the time. As in nonstop. Once in a while, she'd say, "Susie, I don't understand you. You travel all over the place and speak to thousands of teenagers every year, but you sure don't say much one-on-one."

I *wanted* to say, "How can I? You never give me a chance!"

Everyone wants to talk. We all have a story to tell. Each of us enjoy having someone listen to what we say. It makes us feel important when someone is truly interested in what we're saying.

LEARN TO LISTEN.

When other people find out you're willing to listen, believe me, they'll talk—and they'll be talking to *you!* But when you listen . . . really listen. I'm talking about genuine listening—not the kind of "listening" where you focus your eyes on the person speaking, but your mind is focused on Jason Issacs who's approaching your table.

When someone is talking to you, zero in 100 percent on *that person*. It's easy to tell when someone's just pretending to listen but really thinking about something else. That won't fly in making friends. You'll be known as a phony.

Okay, but once I've learned to be a great listener, what am I going to do with all the stuff I'm hearing? Oooh. That's a good one.

You're going to have to learn to keep secrets. A genuine friend is one who can be trusted. When Josh tells you in confidence that he likes Bethany, you can't run off and tell her—even though it'll kill you not to.

Would it ever be right to break a secret? Oooh. Another good one. And the answer is yes. If your friend is in danger of hurting herself or someone else, you can't keep that information private. But we'll talk more about that later when we get into how to help your friends who are going through really rough times.

Back to keeping secrets. Make it a priority. When people realize they can trust you—truly trust you—they'll feel safe in open-