

Sooner or later, you're going to hear someone you don't know well—maybe they're an old school acquaintance or a friend of a friend—asking if you'd like to hang out, go on a date, meet for dinner, whatever.

What do you do if you don't want to say yes?



It's not that you don't like this person, but you barely have enough time for the friends and responsibilities you have now. Solution—tell the truth, as nicely as you can: "I'm sorry, but right now my life is incredibly hectic, and my schedule is packed. Why don't you give me your number? Maybe we can get together sometime when things calm down."

One issue people sometimes have a problem with is being too nice. They find that if they're polite and friendly to an acquaintance at a bar, or to a friend of a friend, or to a coworker, or to someone they aren't interested in hanging out with, suddenly they'll get deluged with phone calls inviting them on dates- and, worse still, they don't know how to refuse the invitations.

When your actions and attitudes are friendly, even if you think you're "faking it," other people are going to assume that you enjoy their company. So, what should you do when you encounter those people who you don't want to make a part of your social circle but who are still good people?

Respect them. Respect them for who they are as individuals. Remember that you can still abide by the principles of etiquette- consideration, respect, and honesty- without actually liking someone. You might be honest, considerate, and respectful toward your boss, but that doesn't mean you want to socialize with him. Or maybe you have a family member whom you love but with whom you don't like to hang out.

The key is to look past the obnoxious voice or the annoying mannerisms; then we can begin to listen to the person we are with rather than just contemplating whether or not we like him or her. This is true of anyone we listen to: professor, boss, parent, friend. All have qualities that we choose to ignore so that we can focus on the content of what they're saying. This is where respect comes in. When you interact with someone in a respectful and considerate way, personal idiosyncrasies are forgotten, leaving you to enjoy the conversation.