



THE FRIENDSHIP FORMULA

This research is presented in the 11-14 BrainWaves lesson:

Building better connections

About the strategy

Dr Jack Schafer is a psychologist and former FBI special agent who worked in counterintelligence and behavioural analysis. In his book, *The Like Switch: An Ex-FBI Agent's Guide to Influencing, Attracting, and Winning People Over*, he applies lessons from his law-enforcement career to everyday human relationships, explaining how people form connections and how you can influence social interactions.

Schafer outlines what he calls a "Friendship Formula" to explain how relationships form and deepen over time, based on measurable factors like time, shared activities, and emotional closeness. In simple terms, the formula says that friendship develops as a function of time spent together, shared activities, and mutual self-disclosure.

The actual formula is **Friendship = Proximity + Frequency + Duration + Intensity** and this can be explained as:

- **Proximity:** Being physically or situationally near someone.
- **Frequency:** How often you interact with them.
- **Duration:** How long your interactions last.
- **Intensity:** The psychological or emotional depth of those interactions.

The scientific evidence behind the strategy

Schafer's model is drawn primarily from anecdotal experiences and case studies from his FBI career, where building rapport and influence was essential. Whilst there are no peer-reviewed articles about the formula, its components are recognized by social scientists as the building blocks of any relationship. The formula has been adapted in the BrainWaves lesson to make it more accessible and relatable to young people aged 11-14 years (**Time + Connection + Trust**).

Further reading

You can read more about the Friendship Formula in this blog, hosted on Psychology Today:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/let-their-words-do-the-talking/201911/the-friendship-formula>