

Working Through the Nerves of Your First Peer-to-Peer Lounge

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Let's be honest: walking into a new space can feel daunting, especially when you're a few months into the Fall semester, and it seems like everyone else has already found "their people."

If you're feeling this, you're not alone. Many students experience this exact hesitation, and there's a real reason why.

During the first few weeks of school, everyone is actively seeking social connection. Everyone is new, everyone is nervous, and everyone is trying to find their footing. Friend groups form quickly - sometimes out of convenience, you sit next to each other in class, sometimes out of shared circumstances, you're in the same program, and sometimes just because you happened to be in the right place at the right time.

By the time October or November roll around, it can feel like the friend-making window has closed. You look around and see established groups laughing together, and the thought of walking into a space like the Peer-to-Peer Lounge, even though it's designed to be welcoming, can feel intimidating. You might think:

- "Everyone already has friends. I'll be the odd one out."
- "It's too late to make new connections."
- "What if I walk in and don't know what to do?"
- "What if no one talks to me?"
- "What if I don't know what to say?"

These feelings are completely valid. But here's what's important to understand: those early friend groups aren't the final chapter of your social story.

One of the best parts of the Peer-to-Peer Lounge is that it exists outside of that first-month pressure. It's not about forming friend groups out of necessity or proximity, it's about creating a space where you and your peers can come together, grow together, and participate at your own pace.

Here's what makes it different:

It's a judgment-free zone. The Ambassadors aren't there to force connections or make you feel like you need to be "on." You can drop in, grab a snack, work on an assignment, or just sit and relax- it is about feeling welcome, in a welcoming space. No pressure.

Everyone attends for their own reasons. Some people come to chat. Some come to decompress. Some come to play Uno or work on a puzzle. Some just need a quiet place to be. Whatever your reason for attending is the right reason for you!

Connections happen naturally. When you're engaged in an activity - whether it's a goal-setting workshop, creating a mood journal, or collaborating on a painting - conversation flows more easily. You're not staring at each other wondering what to say; you're doing something together, and connection becomes a natural by-product.

It's ongoing. The Peer-to-Peer Lounge is a consistent presence throughout the semester. You can come once, or you can come every week. You can ease gradually and build familiarity over time.

When you walk into the Peer-to-Peer Lounge, you're not the only person who might feel uncertain. You're joining a community of people who are all navigating the same complicated experience of being a student - dealing with stress, figuring out how to balance everything, wondering if they're doing it "right."

You Belong

If you're reading this and feeling hesitant, please know: the Lounge is for you. It's for the student who feels overwhelmed, behind, or who has friends but still feels lonely sometimes. It's for the student who just needs a break and wants to be a part of a community of like-minded individuals.

You don't have to walk in with confidence or know exactly what you're looking for. You can come and just observe, bring a friend, focus on an activity rather than small talk, or leave early if you need to. The Ambassadors are there to support you, not to put you on the spot.

You don't need a reason or an excuse - you just need to show up.

Written by Jaishnav Prasad, Student Life Ambassador

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