

How to Know a Person

by David Brooks

A printable to-do list of the most effective habits from this book. Check one off each day you do it.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰¹ **Ask One Story Question**

In your next real conversation, replace one fact question with a story question: 'What was that like for you?' or 'When did that begin to matter?' Then let the answer breathe.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰² **Wait Before Advising**

When someone shares a problem, count two full beats before offering help. Use the pause to ask, 'Do you want ideas, or do you mostly want me to understand?'

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⁰³ **Notice The Particular**

Listen for one exact phrase, contradiction, or image the person uses. Reflect that detail back. Specific attention feels different from generic empathy.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰⁴ **Name The Role**

If someone seems trapped in a familiar role, gently name it: 'It sounds like everyone expects you to be the steady one.' Then ask what that role costs them.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰⁵ **Return To The Thread**

Within a week, follow up on something vulnerable someone told you. Remembering is how a conversation becomes accompaniment instead of content.