

HOSTS & GUESTS



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SUMMARY

**Healthy community doesn't just happen—
it's built by people who take initiative.
Some students wait for others to make the
first move, but great leaders think differently.
They act like hosts, not guests.
A host looks for ways to connect, serve,
and make others feel at home.**

This lesson helps you move from waiting to welcoming—learning how to take responsibility for relationships, build trust, and create belonging wherever you go.

**“Some folks make you feel at home;
Others make you wish you were.”**

— Anonymous

While attending a university in London years ago, a young man accepted a position in East Africa. He was excited to learn all he could about life, work, and faith from the family he'd live with for seven months. Unfortunately, the family never reached out to him. They didn't help him get settled, model the faith they claimed, or show much interest in his experience. The student later said he learned more from what they didn't do than from what they did. Discouraged, he moved home to India—and eventually led a revolution. His name was Mahatma Gandhi.

That family in Africa had no idea who was in their midst. They missed the chance to influence one of the most significant leaders of the 20th century—simply because they didn't take initiative. They saw themselves as guests in their own relationships, not hosts.

Think about the difference. A guest waits for someone else to make the first move. A host takes initiative. In every relationship and group setting, one person will naturally act as the “host,” setting the tone for connection. Leaders know this truth: people respond best to those who notice them first.

In college, it's easy to enter new spaces—a class, a club, a dorm floor—and wait for others to include you. But leadership begins when you stop waiting and start welcoming. When you become the one who says, “Hey, come join us,” you create belonging for others and confidence in yourself.

PRINCIPLES FOR BECOMING A HOST

- 1. Initiate Connection.** Good hosts make the first move. They greet others, ask questions, and show interest. When you start a conversation or invite someone in, you communicate value before you say a word.
- 2. Connect with Empathy.** Great hosts help others feel comfortable and seen. They look for common ground and listen well. As Dr. Elmore writes, “They let others be the main attraction.”

3. Provide for Others. Hosts anticipate needs and meet them—just as good leaders do. In relationships, this might mean sharing notes, offering a ride, or helping someone find their way around campus.

4. Direct with Care. A host gives guidance when others feel lost or unsure. They help others find clarity and confidence. Leaders don't control people—they equip them to move forward.

5. Add Value Wherever You Go. As Tim Elmore says, "My goal is for others to be better off after having spent time with me." That's what hosts do—they make every space better simply by showing up with intention.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A HOST

- You build stronger, more genuine relationships.
- You gain confidence in social and leadership settings.
- You influence the culture around you by making others feel seen.
- You attract trust and respect through initiative and kindness.
- You become the kind of person people want to follow.

Pause here. Take a few minutes for each person to share one thing from the lesson above that stood out to them. What made you choose that part?

REFLECT AND RESPOND

“BEING A HOST”

Take some time individually to write your answers to these questions. Afterward, the group should spend 5-10 minutes sharing and discussing their answers.

- 1. When have you felt like a “guest” in a new environment? What difference would it have made if someone had acted like a host toward you?**

- 2. Why do you think so many people wait for others to make the first move in relationships?**

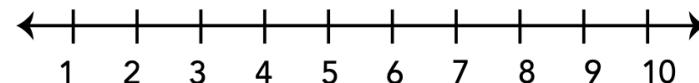
- 3. What does it look like to “go first” in your dorm, your friend group, or your classes?**

- 4. Who in your life models what it means to be a host—someone who notices and includes others? What can you learn from their example?**

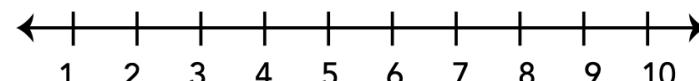
SELF ASSESSMENT

Rate Yourself (1, never true of me – 10, always true of me):

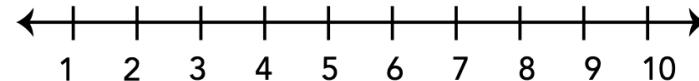
- 1. I take initiative to connect with new people.**



- 2. I make others feel comfortable and included in group settings.**



- 3. I intentionally look for ways to add value to others' lives.**



Pause here. Take a few minutes to share why you rated yourself the way you did in each of the above.

CASE STUDY: MALIK FINDS HIS PLACE

Malik entered his second year of college feeling stuck between two worlds. His freshman year had been... fine. He went to class, got decent grades, and hung out with a few people from his dorm, but he never really felt like he belonged anywhere. He often described himself as “just floating”—present, but not connected. Over the summer, most of the casual friendships he’d made faded away, and returning to campus as a sophomore felt strangely like starting over.

One night during the first week of classes, Malik attended an interest meeting for a campus organization he’d followed since freshman year but never joined. He slipped into a seat in the back, hoping someone might notice him or strike up a conversation. No one did.

Walking back to his residence hall, Malik had a realization that stung a little: he had spent an entire year waiting for people to pull him in. Waiting to be invited. Waiting to be included. Waiting for belonging to happen by itself.

A few days later, while eating lunch alone in the student union, Malik noticed a first-year student standing awkwardly near a table, clearly unsure where to sit. Malik hesitated—he’d never been the one to initiate—but something inside nudged him. If you want belonging, he thought, maybe you need to help create it.

He waved the student over and said, “Hey, feel free to join me if you want.” The student’s shoulders relaxed immediately. They talked about classes, hometowns, and campus life, and Malik was surprised at how natural it felt to simply notice someone else.

That small moment sparked something new. Over the next few weeks, Malik decided to experiment with being a “host” instead of a “guest.” He started greeting people in class, inviting others to sit with him at events, and joining study groups instead of waiting to be asked. He even returned to the organization meeting—this time choosing a seat in the front, introducing himself to others, and asking how he could get involved.

Slowly, the campus that once felt distant began to feel personal. The more Malik initiated, the more friendships he formed. People started waving at him across the quad, asking for his help, and inviting him to hang out. For the first time since coming to college, he felt rooted—because he was actively helping build the community he wanted to be part of.

By mid-semester, Malik realized something important: belonging didn't appear when he waited for others to create it. It grew when he took the role of a host—someone who sees people, steps toward them, and makes space for them.

Malik's story shows that connection is not an accident. It's a choice. And sometimes, the moment you decide to stop waiting and start welcoming is the moment you finally find your place.

REFLECT AND RESPOND:

Where in your life do you tend to wait for others to go first—and what's one small “host moment” you could take this week to create connection instead of waiting for it?

TAKE ACTION

Identify one situation this week where you can act like a host instead of a guest—such as starting a conversation with someone new, inviting a classmate to lunch, or helping a peer feel welcome.

Choose one relationship that could grow stronger if you took more initiative. What's one small action you can take to serve or encourage that person?

Before your next group or class, remind yourself: "I'm here to add value." Watch how that simple mindset shift changes your influence.

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

— John C. Maxwell