

# People Aren't Meant to Talk This Much

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Your social life has a biological limit: 150. That's the number—Dunbar's number, proposed by the British psychologist Robin Dunbar three decades ago—of people with whom you can have meaningful relationships.

What makes a relationship meaningful? Dunbar gave *The New York Times* a [shorthand answer](#): “those people you know well enough to greet without feeling awkward if you ran into them in an airport lounge”—a take that may accidentally reveal the substantial spoils of having produced a predominant psychological theory. The construct encompasses multiple “layers” of intimacy in relationships. We can reasonably expect to develop up to 150 productive bonds, but we have our most intimate, and therefore most connected, relationships with only about five to 15 closest friends. We can maintain much larger networks, but only by compromising the quality or sincerity of those connections; most people operate in much smaller social circles.

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