

A GUIDE
TO ENHANCE
MENTAL HEALTH

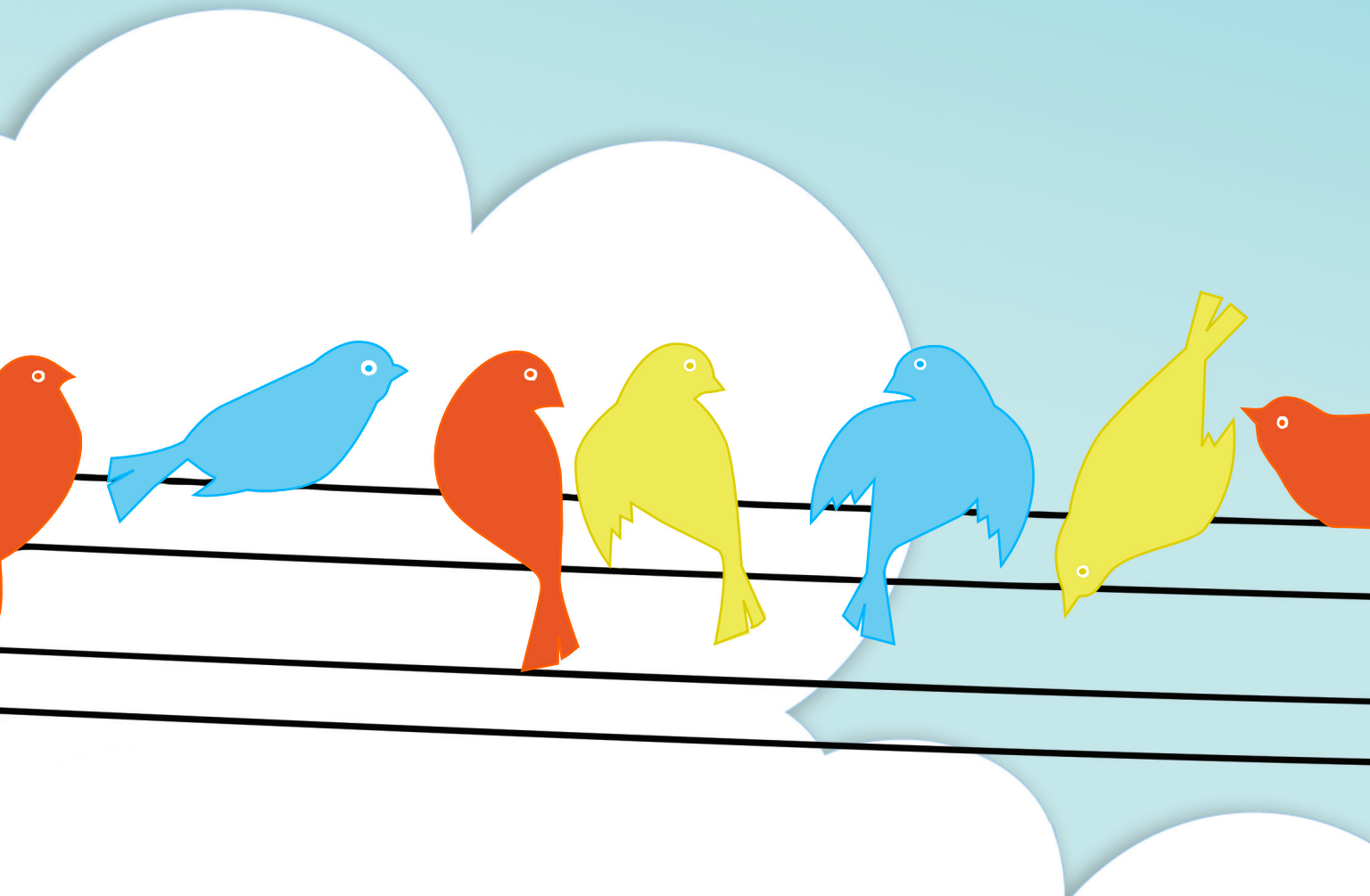
FRIENDS

why we need them
and how to be one

THREE TYPES OF
FRIENDSHIPS

WHY THEY
ARE SO HARD

IMPROVING FRIENDSHIP SKILLS





WHY YOU NEED FRIENDSHIPS

From birth, most people begin forming connections with their mother, father, siblings and, eventually, friends. Our need for healthy friendships is so strong that behavioral experts are discovering a **direct correlation between our lack of true friends and our susceptibility to mental illness as well as our overall ability to cope with life's challenges.**

As social creatures, we benefit greatly from the companionship of our friends and, even, to a certain degree, our casual acquaintances. In some cases, friendships can help lower the levels of anxiety and stress that we experience. These **benefits to our physical and psychological health increase** the closer our friends are. Our close friends thus contribute to our overall wellness, as well as help us cope with the conflicts and solve the challenges we face in our lives.

But close friendships are so much more than an elixir for great health. Gaining deep and **close friendship is near the top of life's greatest pleasures.** Just visualize being at a perfect place in life: it's likely, right in the middle of this image, stand your closest and most valued friends. As humans, our brains are wired for relational connections. Close friendships arouse chemicals within the pleasure centres of our brains. **Only if we have healthy trusting friendships can we thrive and live a truly fulfilled life.**

HOW do you do at friendships?

Few of us ever reflect on how we do friendships. It's not something we feel comfortable really talking about. Somehow, as we pass from childhood and youth into adulthood, life's bustle and fast pace has a way of consuming our energy – leaving time for friendship low on your list of priorities.

But what if you were to ask yourself deliberately and introspectively: **What kind of friend am I and is enhancing my friendship skills something I would like to do? And if I did, what value would it bring to my life?**

The most effective way to learn how well you do at friendships is to ask others: the challenge with this exercise is that it **takes tremendous courage**. Round up six of your friends or acquaintances and ask them to respond to the 2 questions below. **If that's not possible, do the exercise on your own**, but try to be as honest with yourself as you can.

Question #1

Imagine you're on stage in a theatre looking out into the rows of seats. Now, place your friends in one of the three rows using the description below that best characterizes the friendship and not what you desire it to be. Write out which row you think each friend would sit in (for a more detailed description of the three types of friendships, see pages 4-5).



Front row: The intimacy in our close friendships allows honesty, vulnerability, high trust levels, encouragement, validation and pleasure to occur. Although these are enduring friends whose presence in your life is a given, they can fall back to the second or third row if the relationship is not nurtured. Write names of people:



Second row: General friendships sit between close friendships and casual acquaintances. These are the kind of relationships like those you would have with a neighbor: you're cordial to one another, and feel an easygoing connection, but don't know each other all that well. Write names of people:



Third row: Casual acquaintances are friends with whom you have occasional contact and light-hearted conversation. This type of friend has the opportunity to be in your theatre, but their encouragement and feedback do not play a central role in your life. Write names of people:

Question #2

If you could wave a magic wand, what would you like to see changed in each of these friendships?

WHY we lack close friendships

There can be many reasons why we lack people in our front row of close friendships, but these two are the most significant:

1. We have not been taught or modelled the skills required to have these type of friendships. *I never had any examples of close friendships to follow when I was growing up, so how am I supposed to know the behaviors that create them. And since they were never part of my values systems, I've never invested the time and energy it takes to find and develop them* (see pages 8-9).
2. Our ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) have ingrained in us the fear that relationships involve suffering and pain. *Anybody who's ever been close to me has hurt me. Life has taught me that it's best to avoid closeness and intimacy, keep to myself and have my guard up. That way, I'll never have to experience that kind of pain again* (see pages 8-9).

No matter what the reasons for lacking close friendships, most people can learn how to have them while still feeling a sense of security and safety.

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE FRIENDSHIP TYPES

A helpful visual for gaining insights into the nature of the different friendships in your life is the theatre analogy. The empowering part of this exercise is that you get to decide who sits where. It's good to want to move people closer to the front row, but the real purpose of this exercise is to increase awareness of where they sit in your life right now. We need to remember that friendships are continually changing and being influenced by various factors such as the energy and commitment you invest, the trust quotient, your level of attraction, and the type of friendship you desire. Because these different factors can themselves change over time, your friends may move to different rows or remain in the same row, depending upon how your relationship evolves.





Front row – Close friendships

These are your most trusted and easily accessible friends whose voices and faces you hear and see the most. You feel safe and comfortable with them, and look to them for feedback and support. They become the mirror that helps you see who you really are. They are the ones who give you a strong sense of validation and affirmation. Because you share a high trust quotient, you have few secrets from them: they truly know you and truly love you for who you are. These friendships are characterized by a level of intimacy you don't share with others. This intimacy allows microscopic honesty, vulnerability, authenticity and unconditional acceptance, which are the main characteristics that define close friendship (see pages 6-7 for a complete list). These are people for whom you feel love — the love shared by friends — and you may see as part of your family. If anybody is going to point out your blind spots, you want it to be your close friends, because you can be sure they only want what's best for you. Your close friendships require a deep commitment. Be patient, as they may take time to cultivate, but they will become one of your most valued assets. However, if you take them for granted and don't nurture them, they may possibly move to the back rows or exit your life completely.



Second row - General friendships

This type of friendship lies between close friendships and casual acquaintances. They're the type of friendly ongoing relationship you might have with a neighbor: you're both cordial, but don't know much about one another. These friends are a little harder to see and hear than your friends in the first row. If they call you out on a blind spot, you may hear them, but, since the trust quotient is not high, you might not really listen to them. Most of these friendships are fine as they are. Others, however, have the potential to move up a row. What often prevents relationships from graduating to a higher level of intimacy is lack of relationship skills or fear of being hurt (see pages 8-9). Although remaining at arms' length may seem like the safest option when interacting with others, you'll end up missing out on the many benefits that come from a close friendship if you don't act. It will take courage, and for some people counselling/coaching, to start moving these friends toward the first row, but it is possible to do so by consistently practicing just a few of the behaviors listed on pages 6-7.



Third row – Casual acquaintances

These are people with whom you have occasional contact and light-hearted conversation – people like your mailman or some in-laws or co-workers. You are friendly but, given the low trust quotient, you don't share close, personal details with them. This type of friend has the opportunity to be in your theatre, but their encouragement and feedback do not carry much weight in your life. Still, they are potentially significant, since most friendships begin in the third row. Try to make an effort to discern which casual acquaintances are ready to move up some rows and begin practicing with them some of the behaviors that characterize close friendships listed on pages 6-7.



Intimacy is an essential part of all of our closest and healthiest relationships. Intimacy is when there exists an atmosphere of trust that allows us to be microscopically honest, vulnerable and authentic with the other person. Learning to have intimacy in our close friendships enhances our ability to form healthy, lasting relationships with our partner and family.

BEHAVIORS THAT CHARACTERIZE CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS

Not all of your friendships will be front-row close friendships. This is OK. Having the majority of your friends sitting in the back two rows is absolutely normal. Still, you need to have, or be working toward, at least one or more close friendships. They are central to your mental health and your ability to accomplish important life goals.

It isn't the number of such friendships that is important. Nor is friendship a popularity contest. Some people are content with only a couple of close friendships while others enjoy having more.

We're all different and just as we are different, so too are each of our friendships. The following list reflects behaviors that are characteristic of close friendships and are associated with the benefits in the right column. Some friendships may be characterized by some of these behaviors, while others may be characterized by other behaviors.

Although all of these behaviors are good for developing and maintaining our friendships, it isn't how many of these behaviors you engage in that is important. Rather, it is the time you spend and the quality with which you practice them that plays a key role in moving friendships from the back rows into the first row.

Finding and maintaining a close friendship is a realizable goal that offers incalculable benefits for your physical and mental health. The added bonus provided by such friendships is that they can help you achieve your life goals and enrich your life. As with all good things, it requires an investment of time. This is the challenge, since we frequently try to pack too much into our day, leaving little room to cultivate close friendships.

MUTUAL BEHAVIORS PRACTICED BETWEEN PEOPLE WHO DESIRE CLOSE FRIENDSHIP

You regularly try to initiate activities, even when the other person has not been as proactive in pursuing you.



You listen and understand one another in a way that makes the other person feel understood.



You are free to be your authentic self instead of your fabricated self (the self you create so others will like you). This requires a commitment to microscopic honesty and willingness to be vulnerable.



You set boundaries and know when to ask for things that are important to you.



You share a desire to creatively and intuitively serve and perform random acts of kindness for one another.



You are spontaneous without being irresponsible.



You like to play and laugh on a regular basis.



You grieve with me when hurtful things happen to me without always trying to fix the problem.



You strive to find similar values, yet you can both accept values that are different.



You accept each other's shortcomings without judgement.



You read each other's emotional state and extend empathy, compassion and support.



When you identify a blind spot that is hurting the other person, you have the courage to gently help them gain awareness and change their behavior.



You embrace humility and ask for forgiveness when your actions are hurtful.



You forgive when an apology is offered.



You never lose sight of one another's potential and express it through validating statements that build each other up and reinforce this potential, no matter how small or undeveloped it is.



You accept the fact that you will get hurt by the other person and are ready to repair any fractures by being committed to humility, forgiveness and getting the friendship back on track.



You regularly spend time with your friend. If you can't physically be with them, you give them a phone call, write them an email or interact with them on a social network.



THE VALUE RECEIVED

- Everyone needs to feel wanted and valued. Pursuing a friend or being pursued fulfills these needs.
- You aren't just waiting for my lips to stop moving so that you can one-up me with your bigger and better story. You actually want to understand. You ask good questions. This is how I become known on a heart level. The old adage holds true: "The greatest hunger of the human soul is to be understood."
- I am revealing the real me and viewing the real you. Neither of us has to fake that we are something we are not to gain each other's respect or affirmation.
- You don't assume responsibility for my stuff and I don't for yours. At the same time, we're always ready to reach out to ask for help and to help one another.
- Each of us long to be a priority without those ugly strings attached. And we all instinctually follow the law of reciprocity: You make me and my needs a priority in your life, and I'll do the same for you. I am not alone!
- These are the last-minute road trips and pizza runs that keep the friendship fresh!
- When I am free, I am fun and willing to risk looking silly. Life is a blast!
- When I am grieving, you are with me on the journey, not trying to force me to "get over it." You seek to understand, rather than impose your own ideas and logic on the situation.
- There is comfort and camaraderie knowing that you and I have the same core values and won't be pushing each other to do or believe things that are outside of our heartfelt convictions. It's the freedom to be who you really are.
- If you are really there for me, then you rush to help me when I fall short in life. You still call me on character weaknesses, but with constructive criticism, not condemnation or judgement.
- You are attuned to my thoughts and feelings even when I'm trying to repress or suppress them. You pick up that something is off and you ask what's up. What comes next is not advice or nitpicking, but concern and understanding.
- I know where your finish line is and won't let you drop out of the race if you're discouraged. I give you the encouragement and support you need to finish what's important to you. I remind you who you really are.
- When I screw up, you don't have to walk on eggshells wondering how you can say something to me without me becoming angry or withdrawn. That's because you know I will apologize promptly when you alert me to my fault and will make the necessary amends.
- When you apologize, I can be expected to quickly extend forgiveness so that we can return to our usual relationship with unbroken trust.
- Through listening well and asking good questions, you discover who I am and who I am called to be. You believe in me even when I don't and speak courage to my heart.
- Life is messy and complicated and there will be conflict, which will have to be overcome. There will be difficult conversations, even fights, but we will get through them if we prioritize the friendship, stick to our values and embrace humility. Knowing this gives me great confidence so I'm not in fear of "what if" but feel joy for what is.
- Time is the fertile ground in which friendships blossom and flourish.



Do not save your
loving speeches

For your friends till
they are dead;

Do not write them on
their tombstones,

Speak them rather
now instead.

— *Anna Cummins*



A man in a dark suit and tie, a woman in a light blue blazer, and another woman in a green long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants stand against a red wall. The man is on the left, the woman in the blazer is in the center, and the woman in the green shirt is on the right. They are all looking directly at the camera. A yellow horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text.

Why close friendships can be so challenging

Anybody can sympathize with the sufferings of a friend, but it requires a very fine nature to sympathize with a friend's success. — *Oscar Wilde*

Which of the following is true for you?

1. Intimacy was not modelled to me as a child – so how am I supposed to know how to have a close friendship?

What we learn as children is often what we live out as adults. So, **if you witnessed the dynamics of close and intimate relationships with parents and other role models in childhood, you will likely have the skills and capacity to repeat the same behaviors as an adult.** But **if you never observed such relationships as a child, you will not have any prior programming to help you develop** the behaviors associated with close friendships in your adult life.

In addition, what we receive as a child becomes a value and what we value is what we spend our time and money on. (Some words of wisdom: if you want to learn what someone's real values are, follow them around and see what they spend their time doing and their money on.) **Having close friendships requires you to place a high value on them,** not taking them for granted or pretending you don't need them at all.

2. My Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) cause me to fear close friendship out of fear of being hurt again.

When a young child goes through any or all of the five Adverse Childhood Experiences* listed below, they will end up placing an additional financial burden on the health-care system because of their mental and physical health issues as adults. They will also experience many problems when facing life's challenges, including difficulties having and maintaining close and intimate friendships.

The five adverse childhood experiences:

1. Verbal abuse
2. Emotional abuse
3. Physical abuse
4. Sexual abuse
5. Neglect

How ACEs Affect Your Friendships

A close friendship requires a high **trust quotient**. It also means understanding that getting hurt comes with the territory and developing the humility and skills to repair any fractures that arise in the course of a relationship.

But when you have been hurt as a child by important people in your life, trusting anybody is difficult. And if you have multiple fractures that have never healed, repairing fresh ones may seem impossible. Read the story of Sandra (page 15) to see how working through the issues that stemmed from her ACEs allowed her to finally experience close friendship.

* The ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study was a large-scale investigation conducted over several years, representing some of the most significant in-the-field research ever conducted on mental-emotional health.



THINGS TO DO TO CREATE CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS

Each of us may be at a different place in respect to our skill level and the value we put on friendship. Some of us may already have established some skills to help us develop close friendships. Others may be struggling to move potential friends to the second row, let alone the first. Regardless of where we may find ourselves, we can all improve our friendship skills.

You first saw the following list of behaviors associated with close friendships on pages 6-7. Here we offer tips on how to succeed in introducing these behaviors in your life. Begin to work on these in sequential order as they are designed to build off of each other. If you find that you have mastered one, move on to the next.

1. **You are willing and eager to initiate activities, even when the other person has been hard to get hold of or not as proactive as you.**

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Reach out to your friend by texting them, contacting them on Facebook, or just phoning them to say, “Hey, let’s hang out.” Try to come up with some creative ideas for hangout time – not just going to see a movie every week. Emotional intelligence plays a role here, because there will be times, given life’s complexities, that a friend may be unavailable and we have to be willing to accept that.

2. **You are able to listen and understand one another in a way that makes the other person feel understood.**

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Learn to reflect their thoughts and feelings without criticism or judgement. Simply act as a mirror that reflects what they are sending out. See if you have it close. Try again. No “you should” or advice allowed.



3. You are free to be your authentic self instead of your fabricated self (the self you create so others will like you). This requires a commitment to microscopic honesty and willingness to be vulnerable.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: We all have a fake/authentic scale we live with depending on our situation. Dial yourself up one more notch toward authentic and see what your friend does. Let them know who the authentic you is. Your front row needs to have people in them who celebrate the authentic you.

4. You set boundaries and know when to ask for things that are important to you.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Boundaries are like a little picket fence surrounding you: you determine who gets through and how they will treat you. *I am responsible for my property and you for yours. I can stand at the boundary line and offer help, or ask for your help.*

5. You share a desire to creatively and intuitively serve and perform random acts of kindness for one another.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Discover which love language fills your friend up the most: healthy touch; words of encouragement; acts of kindness; gifts; or quality time. Then give some thought as to how you can creatively communicate love. Act, get feedback, and try again.

6. You are able to be spontaneous without being irresponsible.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Put it in your calendar to do something spontaneous for your friend (sounds weird, but do it). Being spontaneous isn't the same as not having a plan. Being spontaneous means giving yourself permission to step out of your ordinary, but safe, routine. By releasing yourself from the predictable, your future moments become uncertain. This uncertainty forces you to live in the present. There's something profound about being in the moment with someone you care about. It is in these moments that memories and the bonds of friendship are forged and strengthened.

You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.

– Dale Carnegie



7. You like to play and laugh on a regular basis.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Humour flourishes in the freedom and confidence that comes with close friendship. Take a risk and say the funny thing that comes to mind – even if it's silly. Play games together.

8. You are able to grieve with me when hurtful things happen to me without always trying to fix the problem.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: This is when silence is golden. Just be near and take your cues from what your friend is feeling. Don't try to move them to what you think they should be feeling.

9. You strive to find similar values, yet you can both accept values that are different.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: It's important to understand what your values are first. Which are primary and non-negotiable? Which are secondary and negotiable? Some primary values might be surrounding spirituality, family, ecology or the environment, finances, and so on. Write them down and refine them. For example, some friends may be vegan and that is non-negotiable for them. You need to know that.

10. You can accept each other's shortcomings without judgement.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Start by sharing some small mistakes and see how they respond. If they respond with mercy and kindness, move to more serious

ones. Notice how you respond to their screw-ups. Marshall Rosenberg's book *Non-Violent Communication* is an excellent resource if conflict does arise.

11. You read each other's emotional state and extend empathy, compassion and support.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Ninety-three percent of communication is comprised of tone and non-verbal cues (facial expression). The information provided by this body language is essential to communicating with others. In its absence, such as communication via a phone call, we may become hyper-vigilant to background noises and silence. With email, which has no non-verbal information, we may impose our own mood or make unwarranted assumptions about what is meant. Learn to pay attention and ask lots of questions such as, "When you sighed just now, is that because you're tired or frustrated or something else?" Asking questions for clarification is even more critical during phone calls or when reading emails because the risk of misinterpretation is greater without the face-to-face contact.

12. When you identify a blind spot that is hurting your friend, you have the courage to gently help them gain awareness and change their behavior.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Developing courage is like developing a muscle. You need to start slow with small things and build your way up.



13. You embrace humility and ask for forgiveness when your actions are hurtful.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: When you're in the wrong, it's common to try to justify your actions and seek to be understood. Instead, just apologize. Use "sorry" for unintentional wrongs and "Would you forgive me?" for intentional hurts. Add "I don't want to hurt you" or "This relationship is important to me" to help mend the situation.

14. You forgive when an apology is offered.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: You get to choose which is more important to you: being right or your relationship. If being right is more important, then be prepared for loneliness.

15. You never lose sight of one another's potential and express it through validating statements that build each other up and reinforce this potential, no matter how small or undeveloped it is.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: It's usually easier for people to see greatness in others than in themselves. Tell your friend what you appreciate about them and what they are good at. Be honest, but encouraging. After a while, you can ask them to tell you what you are good at (if they don't do it automatically). This is risky, but worth it. You can even do it in groups.

16. You accept the fact that you will get hurt by the other person and are ready to repair any fractures by being committed to humility, forgiveness and getting the friendship back on track.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Most people aren't saints, so be ready to be offended. That's just normal in any relationship. Have an agreement with your friend what you will do when either of you are offended.

17. You make your friendship a priority and schedule time for it accordingly.

TIPS TO SUCCEED: Start with setting aside some time each week. Of course, don't tell them that you are scheduling them in: just do it. We know that it takes time to master a skill, study for a class or learn a job. Developing close friendships takes time as well. It is said that all good things come to those who wait. Close friendships are one of those good things. So give yourself time to learn about your friend and vice-versa. With time, you will discover which of these behaviors are critical to your friendship and learn how to engage in them. You need to be generous and prioritize your time with your friends in order to sustain your close friendships.



How 4 people learned to build and benefit from CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS*



Tom: 37, husband and father of two. Works as a store's general manager. Lonely, but with a chance of a breakthrough.

1

Tom worked hard to get to where he is and had to step on a few toes in the process. He hired several friends to work for him, but when they didn't perform like he thought they should, he isolated himself and became distanced from them. According to Tom, "It's just business." But then he began to feel isolated and distant from everyone, even his family. When his wife said she felt his work was his mistress, he got angry. When she said she was no longer happy in the marriage, he got even angrier and grew sullen and withdrawn. He retreated to his man cave and turned into a virtual hermit, with no real friends in his front or second row.

Fortunately for him, Chad – one of the friends he had shoved aside – had some emotional intelligence and was willing to let go of the past. He invited Tom over for a beer. During the evening, Chad said in a light-hearted but sincere tone, "I really enjoyed our friendship until I started to work for you. Then you became an ass!" They talked about Tom's tendency to avoid conflict and become isolated and distant. If not for Tom's growing awareness of his loneliness, he would have reacted with hostility and resentment. Instead, Chad's comment sparked a renewed desire in him to engage his friends and family even in conflict. His need for connection overcame his reluctance to face emotionally challenging situations.



Dorothy: 28, single and living alone. Wants to get married, but couldn't find Mr. Right and was getting frustrated.

2

Dorothy is bubbly and fun, but this is often a front for feelings of inadequacy and worrying about what people really think of her. She'd always assumed many of her relationships were close, but after learning what that really means, she realized that most of the ones she had were general instead. Dorothy did have close friendships with her sister and an old schoolmate, until minor conflicts and her insistence on sweeping problems under the rug relegated these to merely general. As for men: after a few dates, they always seemed to stop calling.

In reading about the characteristics of close friendship, Dorothy recognized that what she was missing was boundaries and self-respect. She had been bringing neediness and insecurity to her relationships, especially with men, rather than her beauty and strength. Dorothy decided to seek EAP counselling to address and work through these issues. She now has much more self-confidence and has embarked on a long-term romance. (Go Dorothy! Go Dorothy!)



* Names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals.



Sandra: 43, married mother of three kids. Works full-time, as does her husband of 15 years. Suffers from a poor work-life balance.

3

Sandra had no one in her front row of close friends. Her husband seemed more like a friendly roommate than a person with whom she shared true intimacy. Sandra's relationships with her girlfriends also tended to be more general than close friendships. In fact, she found many of these friendships exhausting to maintain, since she believed she always had to appear like a successful businesswoman in front of them when she might be feeling anxious and down.

Through EAP counselling, Sandra came to understand that the only time she received affirmation in her childhood was when she performed well. And now, the money she earned through her job was proof that she was performing well. It was a major epiphany.

Sandra decided to take the vacation time she'd banked long ago for a holiday with her family. She also decided that she no longer wanted any friendships in which she felt she had to put on an act. As Sandra began to make the switch from her fabricated self to her authentic self, some of her friends stopped calling. But she thought it was a price worth paying to have real friendship in her life. Her husband saw the change and asked Sandra about it. She cited an inspirational passage she'd read about love casting out fear and explained, "I don't want the fear of rejection to control me anymore." As Sandra slowly began to let the love in, she opened the door to her husband and some true friends finding their way into her front row.



Kyle: 34, single, lives with his brother. Has lots of friends on Facebook but nobody he actually feels comfortable confiding in.

4

You should see Kyle's Facebook page: he's got over 1,000 friends and his posts are super funny. People love to have Kyle at parties or at their table in restaurants. He's always smiling and joking, which is why everyone assumes he's happy. But nobody knows what's really going on underneath the wisecracking surface.

Kyle doesn't like himself, never has. If someone were to ask him a profound personal question, he'd respond with a one-liner. The pain of being unknown and unloved is so great that he started drinking heavily to numb it. But recently, at work, a facilitator came for a team-building day. "The greatest hunger of the human soul is to be understood," he declared. Kyle couldn't help himself and interjected a funny quip. Everyone promptly forgot what the facilitator had said.

At lunch, the facilitator sat at Kyle's table. He waited until they were alone, then said: "Humour can be a mask or a cover for insecurity. Most of us are afraid that once people get to know us, they won't like us anymore. Could that be true for you?" Kyle was intrigued. No one had penetrated his inner thoughts and feelings before. He bought the facilitator's books and signed up for the online workshops. Now he has one friend seated in row two and is aware of and seeking to curb his problem drinking.



FRIENDS ON FILM

Watch and Learn on YouTube

To eliminate typing these links, a digital copy of this magazine can be found on your health portal, located on your Dashboard under “Wellness Magazines.”

MOVIE CLIPS FROM JERRY MAGUIRE

The movie *Jerry Maguire* may be the ultimate “bromance.” It shows the gradual building of a relationship between a football player and his agent that starts out as a general friendship but eventually turns into a close one.



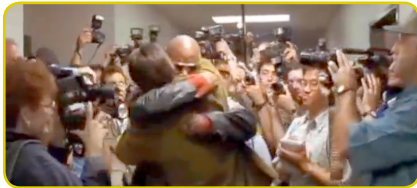
- ★ This scene depicts them as they move into close friendship and challenge one another to realize their full potential.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGt5f70K02Q>



- ★ This scene defines “Quan” – a term coined in the movie to encapsulate the two men’s mutual love and respect.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDSsaj_FI9c



- ★ Here, in one of the high points of the movie, the two friends go in for a hug.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcrxiDWyeVI>

TED TALKS



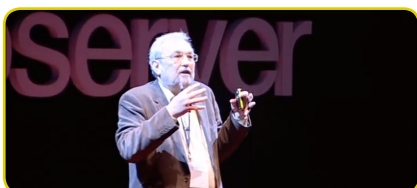
- ★ Friendships in the Age of Facebook: Rory Varrato teaches on friendships, drawing from Socrates and other great thinkers and philosophers. He begins by asking if you have any friends. He ends by challenging you to reclaim intimacy in your friendships.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVRbSuY3h9w>



- ★ Out of the Mouths of Babes: Kids talk about what makes a great friendship.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7w7yXkJTu0>



- ★ Ted Talk: Can the Internet buy you friends?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07lpED729k8>



DINNER WITH FRIENDS

NEXT TIME YOU GATHER WITH YOUR FRIENDS OVER DINNER, TRY THIS DELICIOUS VEGETARIAN CHILI. YOU CAN MAKE IT IN ADVANCE SO THAT YOU CAN SPEND MORE TIME VISITING WITH YOUR FRIENDS, RATHER THAN BEING IN THE KITCHEN.

INGREDIENTS:

1 medium red onion, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
4 garlic cloves, chopped
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 tablespoon ground cumin
2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
salt and black pepper

1 can tomato paste
1 28-ounce can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
1 15.5-ounce can black beans, rinsed
1 15.5-ounce can kidney beans, rinsed
1 medium sweet potato (about 8 ounces), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
low fat sour cream, sliced scallions, sliced radishes, and tortilla chips, for serving

DIRECTIONS:

In a 4- to 6-quart slow cooker, combine the onion, bell pepper, garlic, chili powder, cumin, cocoa, cinnamon, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Add the tomatoes (and their liquid), beans, sweet potato, and 1 cup water.

Cover and cook until the sweet potatoes are tender and the chili has thickened, on low for 7 to 8 hours or on high for 4 to 5 hours (this will shorten total recipe time). Serve the chili with the sour cream, scallions, radishes, and tortilla chips.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Per Serving
Serving Size: Serves 4
Calories 240
Fat 2 g
Sat Fat 0 g
Cholesterol 0 mg
Sodium 1217 mg

Protein 11g
Carbohydrate 47g
Sugar 13g
Fiber 13 g
Iron 4 mg
Calcium 134 mg

Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything.

— *Muhammad Ali*

FRIENDLINESS SURVEY

ISOLATION and DISCONNECTION

In 2011, the Vancouver Foundation polled 275 charitable foundations and 100 community leaders to find out what they believed was their most pressing issue. To their surprise, it wasn't poverty or homelessness: it was isolation and disconnection.

This year, the foundation surveyed 3,841 people by phone and online (in English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi) about their social interactions. The survey results were published last June in a report entitled *Connections and Engagement*.


The report had several positive findings. Forty percent of those surveyed have had a conversation beyond a mere hello with their neighbor once a week or more. And 74 percent know the first names of at least two of their immediate neighbors.

But Vancouverites may be coasting on cordiality rather than engaging in true closeness. A third of respondents said they found it difficult to make friends here. One in four said they were alone more than they wished. People aged 24 to 34 and tenants living in suites in houses (such as basement apartments) were especially prone to loneliness. Furthermore, all of those surveyed who expressed problems making friends reported poorer health and lower trust of others.

The report found that people who have lived in Canada for less than five years have more difficulty making friends (42 percent report three or fewer close friends and 50 percent say it's hard to make new friends) but spend time with their social network more frequently than others.

Thirty-five percent of those surveyed have no close friends outside their own ethnic group. The ethnic group most likely to report having friends outside their own ethnic community are people of South Asian descent (89 percent). South Asians are also more likely than any other ethnic group to have an optimistic view that ties among people in their neighborhood are growing stronger.

The Vancouver Foundation will continue to analyze the data and publish further reports on the results. But they're also doing something about their findings. In conjunction with Simon Fraser University, they'll be holding a summit called *Alone Together: Connecting in the Urban Environment* Sept. 18-23 to examine disconnection and isolation in the Vancouver area.

A photograph of two young boys running on a sandy beach. They are both wearing blue shirts and dark pants. The boy in the foreground is looking back over his shoulder, while the boy behind him is looking forward. They appear to be holding hands or running very close together. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky.

True friendship
multiplies the good in
life and divides its evils.
Strive to have friends,
for life without friends
is like life on a desert
island... to find one real
friend in a lifetime is
good fortune; to keep
him is a blessing.

- Baltasar Gracian

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