

## Navigating Friendships

**A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you. -Elbert Hubbard**

All humans are social beings. We thrive when we are in the company of other individuals. It is important to acknowledge that we need other people to live our best lives. Whether it be with family, friends, your doctor, or the pilot of the plane taking you on your vacation. Some people impact us closely and in great ways while others play smaller but significant roles in our journey. It is important to be able to distinguish within these closer relationships when they are healthy and when they are damaging.

Despite our need to create and be in all kinds of relationships, our ability to choose is important when determining what kind of friendships we want in our lives. Yes, we *do* have the ability to choose which kinds of people we allow into our lives and become friends with. It is important to know how to differentiate between good and bad company.

Below I am sharing a couple of tips to help you navigate friendships and decide whether a person is a positive or negative friend in your life.

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### Healthy friendships:

- add to your life in a positive way
- make genuine and reasonable efforts to be in your life and keep in touch
- are there for you during good *and* bad times
- communicate with you and put effort into resolving disagreements
- respect you and your boundaries
- give you the opportunity to be a part of their lives and earn their trust
- earn your trust by keeping secrets and talking well about you behind your back
- don't feel like competition
- allow you to be yourself
- are mutually supportive
- are fun and safe to be around
- listen to each other equally in conversations

### Unhealthy friendships:

- cause distress or drain your energy
- don't check in on you or make reasonable attempts to contact you
- only want to be in your life when it is fun or convenient for them
- ignore you during disagreements or don't make reasonable efforts to communicate with you about mistakes or misunderstandings
- walk over your boundaries or use you
- don't talk about their own lives or invite you to be a part of them
- talk negatively behind your back and spill your secrets
- make things into a competition
- are embarrassed of you or always want to change you
- lack support
- feel risky or unsafe to be around
- dominate conversations

### **Tips on making friends:**

- pursue common interests
- make the first move to talk to them
- ask questions and genuinely seem interested in them
- be a good listener
- make the effort to stay in touch with them
- set dates to hang out or go out
- introduce yourself and swap phone numbers
- mention your interest in being there for them and being their friend
- have good eye contact and body language
- compliment them and add to it by sharing a quick story about yourself related to the compliment
- share personal thoughts and opinions and ask about their own
- talk to people in public places you frequent (ex. dog park, library, gym)
- join social clubs/events
- ask friends to introduce you to their friends
- invite other people to places you are going to
- say yes to social invitations you receive
- don't rely on one person, expand and get to know others
- give other's a chance if they made a small mistake or seem too different
- join social media groups on activities or topics you enjoy engaging with
- ask to join someone who is on their own (ex. sit next to them at a café or library – if they are open to it)
- don't limit yourself to your own age group, explore with other's who you'd feel comfortable talking to  
\*unless you are under 18.
- be honest with others about what you are looking for

### **When to end a friendship:**

- they lie, disrespect you frequently, and talk badly about you
- their negativity affects your mood
- you feel obligated to them and don't feel joy around them
- they are a frenemy or have become a toxic person in your life
- your values in life don't match up (in a big way)
- you have drifted apart and don't feel an interest in repairing the friendship
- they use you for their own gain

### **Tips on ending friendships:**

- be honest about why you are wanting to step away from the friendship
- communicate with them in a respectful way
- gradually reduce your social interaction with them
- talk about your feelings in the friendship and why you feel things are not working out
- give a reason for taking a break from the friendship
- describe how your needs are not being met in the friendship
- write a letter to the person explaining how you feel and the actions you are taking to end the friendship
- don't seek revenge or intentionally talk bad about them
- don't ask another friend to end the friendship for you
- delete the person from social media
- avoid manipulation tactics or turning them into the "bad guy"
- don't let them gaslight or manipulate you into being their friend
- remind yourself that it is OK to end friendships for your well-being.