

A photograph of three young people running through a grassy field under a cloudy sky. The person on the left is a girl with long brown hair, wearing a light blue tank top and blue jeans, carrying a yellow and white patterned bag. The person in the middle is wearing a red and white plaid shirt and blue jeans. The person on the right is a boy with dark hair, wearing a red hoodie and brown shorts. They are all running towards the right side of the frame.

**Lean on me
Count on me
I'll be there for you**

The Friendship Issue

August 2026

Legacy Gazette

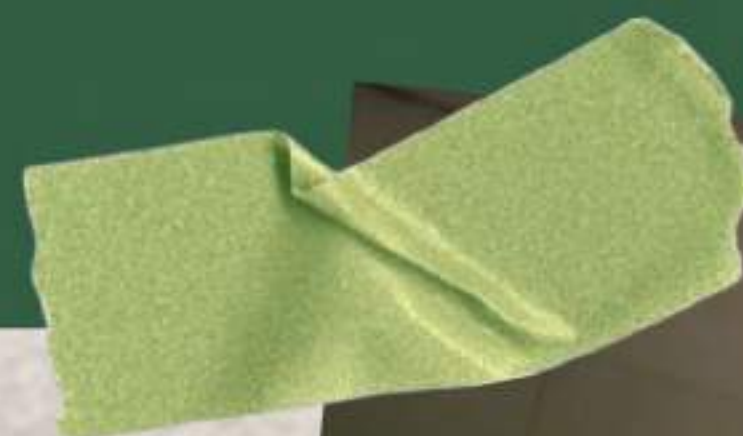
(The **Best** and **Worst**) Film Friendships That Nobody Talks About

Caitlin Liao

When the phrase “film friendship” comes up, everyone immediately thinks of *Stand By Me*, *Friends*, or *The Breakfast Club*. These films are filled with comradery, unlikely friendships, and characters who are changed for the better by their alliances. However, the newly-released *Obsession* or the iconic 2004 *Mean Girls* are examples of the darker side of friendships in film. Let’s dive into five of the best and worst friendships in film — that nobody talks about.

David and Stevie from *Schitt’s Creek* (2015-2020)

Schitt’s Creek, first aired in 2015, is a Canadian sitcom created by Eugene Levy and his son Dan Levy. It follows a formerly-wealthy couple that suddenly finds themselves broke and is forced to move to a town that they bought and named earlier as a joke. While the focus of the show are the core members of the family—Johnny, Moira, Alexis, and David Rose—one of the best relationships in the film is between David and his co-worker Stevie Budd. The two work at the Rosebud Motel together, but are complete opposites otherwise. David is flamboyant, pansexual, and high-energy. Stevie is cynical, sarcastic, and rude. The two form an unlikely bond over their shared distaste for other people, and soon become best friends. Stevie, with her hard slaps to reality, teaches David to care for people other than himself. In return, David pushes Stevie to believe in herself and her own potential. The two go from lovers to best friends, sharing ups and downs but never ceasing to care for each other. They are a great example of a healthy, balanced, unlikely friendship in film.





Bear and Ian from Obsession (2026)

*light spoilers

For every iconic duo is a toxic relationship not to idolize. The main focus of Obsession is the aftermath of a wish Bear makes for the girl he likes, Nikki, to love him more than anything else in the world. Discussions about the movie revolve mostly around the complex character of Bear and the decisions he made. However, Bear’s relationship with his friend Ian is a perfect example of a friendship to avoid at all costs. Ian and Bear are part of a four-person friend group along with Nikki and Sarah. Bear has liked Nikki for a while, but Ian has been secretly seeing Nikki for two years and never told Bear. Instead, Ian feeds into Bear’s obsessive crush. When Bear asks for advice on how to talk to Nikki, Ian gives him terrible advice in order to sabotage him. Even at the end of the film, Ian is still a bad friend. Bear asks Ian to help him reverse the wish he made on Nikki, but Ian wishes for a million dollars instead. Then, he explicitly ignores the warnings Bear gives him about coming over, and the consequences are brutal. Neither Bear or Ian are pillars of morality, but together their relationship is just awful.



Agatha, Zero, and M. Gustave in The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014)

The Grand Budapest Hotel is an iconic Wes Anderson staple, with eccentric characters, colorful scenes, and an eclectic plot. It tells the story of a writer who encounters the owner of an aging hotel, Zero, who tells him of his early years as a bellboy under the exceptional concierge, M. Gustave. The movie centers around the characters and dynamics of Zero and M. Gustave, so when people think about Agatha, a pastry chef in the movie, they talk mostly about her romantic relationship with Zero. However, Agatha is first and foremost, a fantastic friend. Outside of courtship, Agatha is a confidante of the utmost trust for both Zero and Gustave. She places herself in dangerous situations, such as shootouts and robberies, out of pure loyalty to her friends. She helps them however she can, even smuggling weapons in pastries she made herself. Agatha is returned with unconditional love, trust, and an eternal legacy. After she passes away, Zero maintains the hotel as a shrine for her memory, even suggesting she is the true hero of the story. It’s rare to find such a loyal, brave character in film, and we don’t talk about Agatha enough!



Everyone in It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia (2005-present)

The entire main friend group in the sitcom *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* are horrible friends and people to the point where it is kind of the point of the show. The show itself isn't mainstream-popular, so it isn't widely known just how terrible these friendships actually are. The core friend group consists of three guys, Charlie, Dennis, and Mac, Dennis' sister Dee (short for Deandra), Frank (Dennis and Dee's stepdad/Charlie's roommate.) Over the course of the seventeen seasons this show has been going on, these five betray each other in every way imaginable. To name some, Charlie left Dee alone in a sewer, Frank convinced Dee and Charlie they ate human meat, Frank set Dee on fire, etc. The five are also terrible people in general—they kidnapped a family to recreate the show *Extreme Home-Makeover* at their house, made a fake hostage terrorist tape to intimidate real-estate developers (resulting in them blowing up a building), created a fake cult (leading to someone to "sacrifice" themselves by jumping into a fire), and are consistently racist. Even when they're not targeting each other, they are still terrible friends by encouraging destructive and chaotic behavior.

Tiana and Lottie in The Princess and The Frog (2009)

Some of the finest friendships in film history are found in classic Disney movies, and Tiana and Charlotte (Lottie) are undiscovered gold! Tiana and Lottie come from vastly different economic backgrounds, but have been best friends since their youth. Tiana works two waitressing jobs to earn money while dreaming of opening a restaurant of her own, and Lottie is the socialite daughter of a wealthy man. The movie follows the romance between Tiana and Prince Naveen, who initially came to town looking to marry Lottie for her fortune. When Lottie's father throws a party for Naveen's honor, Lottie gives Tiana enough money to turn an old windmill into her restaurant so she can make desserts for the party. When Tiana spills food on her outfit, Lottie leaves her own party and gifts Tiana a gorgeous dress she knows Tiana would never have accepted otherwise. Lottie is even willing to kiss Naveen in frog-form, just so Tiana can be with her true love. Lottie is spoiled, but never rotten!!! In return, Tiana is a constant pillar and Lottie's one true friend. Tiana listens to Lottie without judgement, and cares for her regardless of money. The two are the epitome of girlhood at its best, and a friendship that everybody needs in their life!!!



Smiles on the Surface

Knives Underneath

Maggie Hsu

Friends are often those who stand by our side, during both ups and downs, a reliable supporter in our lives. A friend is someone you laugh over nothing with, sit in silence without awkwardness, and share the rawest moments in life. But not “friend” fits that image. Have you ever wondered why that one friend only texts for favors? Or why every time you ask to hang out, they are always busy? Are you overthinking, or do you have a fake friend?

Fake friendships are difficult to interpret, and often emotionally exhausting. Classic signs of a fake friend include not valuing your boundaries, constantly demanding favors for their interest, and seeming more jealous than happy for your successes. Fake friends also tend to be highly self-focused, constantly steering conversations back to themselves or only showing interest in your life when it benefits them. Unlike a genuine friendship, these relationships tend to revolve around one person's needs, while the other person adjusts, gives in, or keeps things light to avoid conflict. Over time, you question what role this person truly plays in your life, leading to self-doubt, emotional drainage, numbing-out, and a shrinking of emotions.

Fake friends are commonly portrayed in movies or shows. One of the most recognizable examples is Regina George from Mean Girls. At first glance, Regina is charismatic, popular, and surrounded by friends. However, she frequently manipulates those around her, spreads rumors, and prioritizes her own social status above the well-being of others. Her friendships are built on control rather than trust, demonstrating how someone can appear caring on the surface while acting out of self-interest.





Another example can be found in Toy Story, where Woody initially views Buzz Lightyear as a threat instead of a friend. Consumed by jealousy and fear of being replaced, Woody acts selfishly and even attempts to get rid of Buzz. Although Woody eventually grows into a loyal friend, his early behavior highlights how insecurity and competition can damage relationships. These fictional examples resonate with audiences because they mirror experiences many people encounter in real life: friends who compete instead of support, manipulate instead of communicate, or stay close only when it benefits them.

You may ask, why are people fake friends? Oftentimes, on a deeper level, individuals subconsciously seek attention, approval, or convenience, as that is what friendship means to them. Additionally, without experiences of a healthy friendship, many may be acting from past experiences or insecurity. Psychologists suggest that such behaviors are often rooted in insecurity and unmet emotional needs rather than pure malice. Individuals who constantly seek validation may view friendships as a source of

attention, approval, or convenience instead of a mutually supportive bond. Others may fear rejection so deeply that they become controlling or manipulative in an attempt to protect themselves from being hurt. Social comparison can also play a major role. People who tie their self-worth to popularity, appearance, or achievements may struggle to genuinely celebrate another person's success, leading to jealousy or resentment. In some cases, fake friendships are learned behaviors. Someone who grew up without experiencing healthy relationships may imitate toxic patterns they observed from family members, peers, or social media. While these explanations do not excuse hurtful behavior, they remind us that fake friendships are often symptoms of deeper personal struggles. Understanding the psychology behind these relationships can help us respond with greater awareness—setting boundaries when necessary while recognizing that another person's actions often reflect their own insecurities rather than our worth as individuals. These dynamics can feel personal, but they usually stem from fear of vulnerability, of not being enough, or of needing others too much.

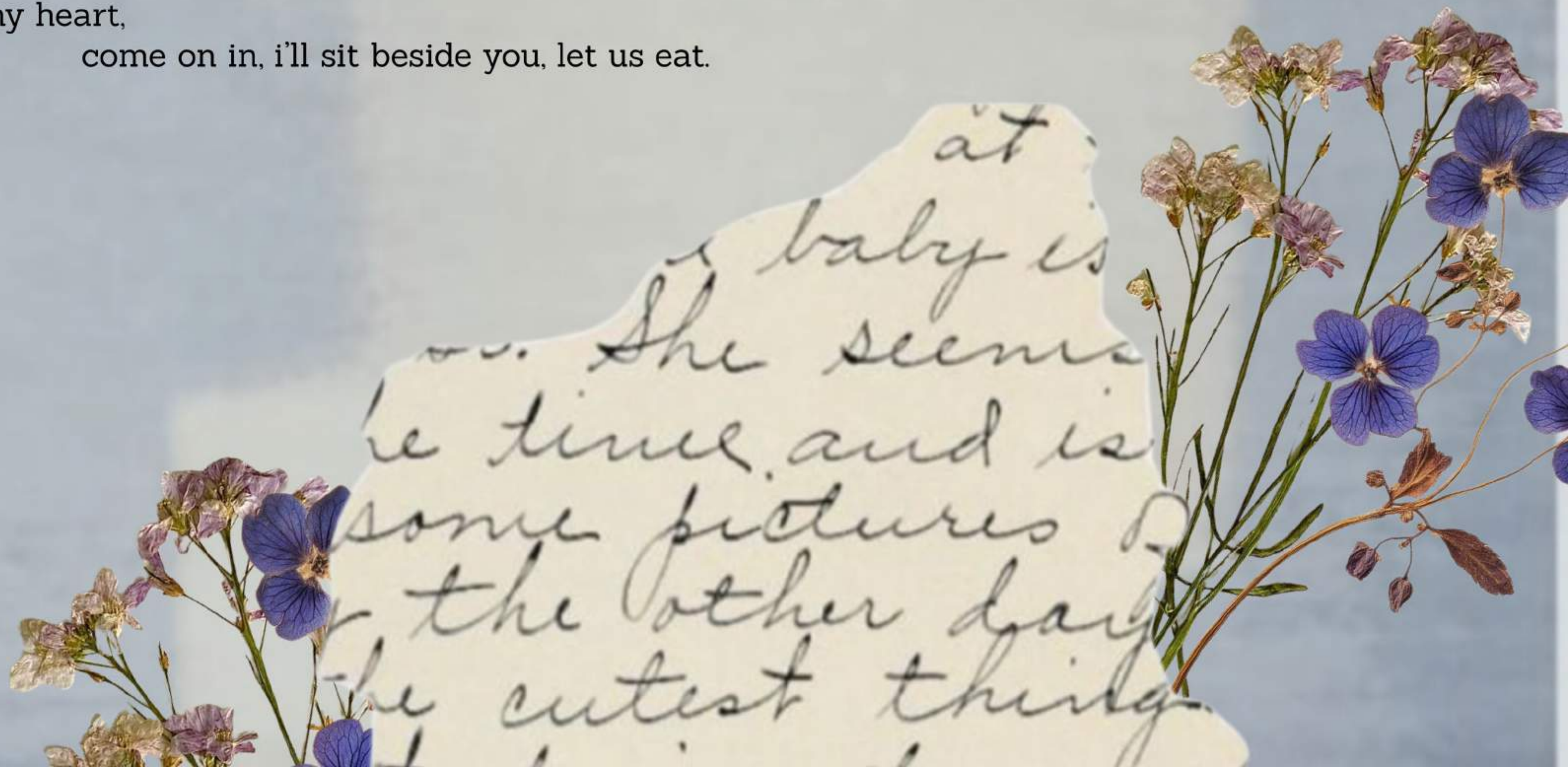
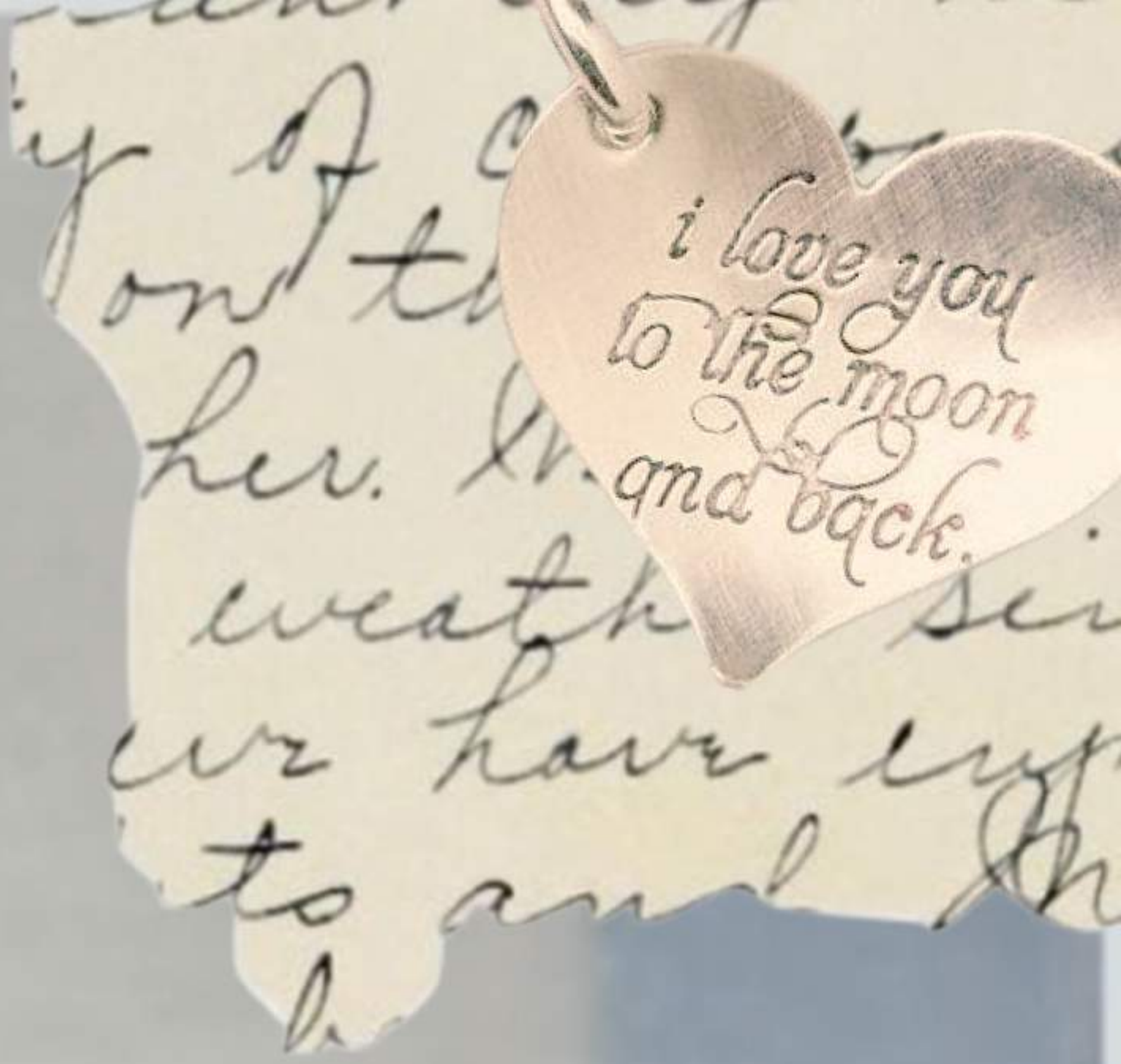
So what do you do if you have a fake friend in your life? Do you panic and confront them? The answer is usually no. Instead, take a step back and evaluate the friendship honestly. If the friendship consistently harms your well-being, setting boundaries can be an important first step. Be clear about what you are and are not comfortable with, and pay attention to how the other person responds. Genuine friends may make mistakes, but they are willing to listen and change. Fake friends, on the other hand, often dismiss your feelings or continue the same behaviors, mostly for their own benefit. Sometimes, the healthiest choice is to distance yourself. Ending a friendship can be painful, especially if you have shared years of memories together. Yet making room for relationships built on mutual respect, trust, and care allows you to surround yourself with people who appreciate you for who you are. After all, friendship is not about having the most friends but about having the right ones.

pet's names

(eliott / sunshine)

Eliott-James Jost

beloved, angel, darling,
qt pi(e), lovely, sugar, dear, sweet
heart,
honey, my love, my miracle, my
bright amidst the dull,
who keeps me
breathing,
who keeps my heart
beating,
when its 1 am and it feels like there
wont be any morning but
there are
people to love,
there will be
my universe
to explore, still, always,
my loved ones,
my friends,
not mine as in owned, mine as in
devoted t(w)o
and i theirs,
theirs as in owned, theirs as in
i trust them, as in
sunshine,
puppy, silly, pretty, sweet
ie,
i made a home for you in
my heart,
come on in, i'll sit beside you, let us eat.



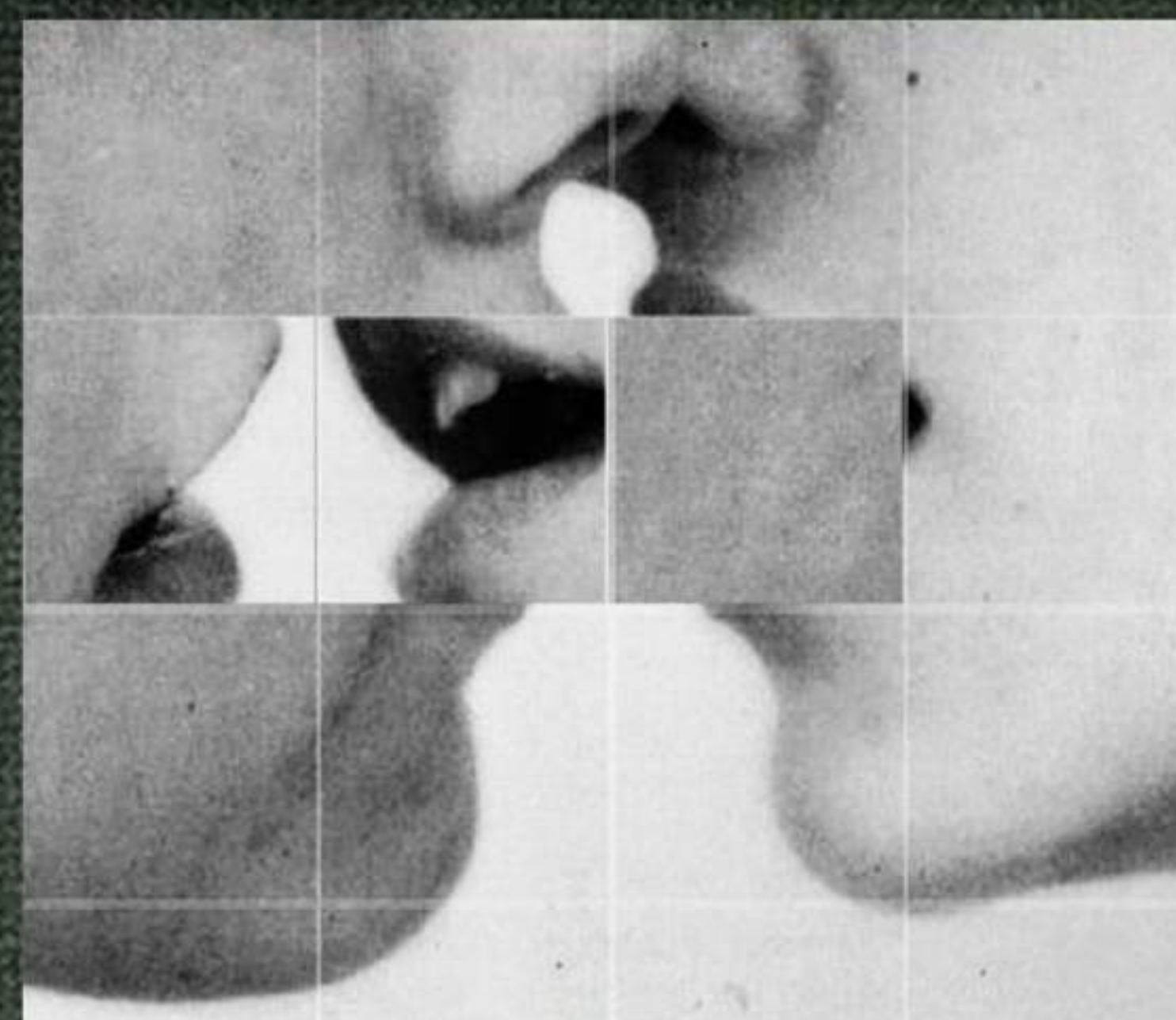
How **Toxic** Relationships Rewrite the Brain

Sophia Zhang

We learn from a young age that human connection is a fundamental pillar of evolutionary survival. In fact, our brains are hardwired to seek safety, validation, and a sense of community in the people around us. However, in this era, where complex social dynamics are increasingly defining values and morals, neuroscientists and psychologists are raising alarms. From overtly toxic friendships to the ambiguous territory of so-called "situationships", the concern is not just how bad relationships affect our mood and productivity, but how they may fundamentally alter our neurobiology.

While in the past, psychologists often treated relationship stress as an emotional hurdle to be overcome with more boundaries and a person simply having enough willpower, new research suggests something more alarming: chronic relation toxicity acts as a physical stressor too, and it can literally reshape the brain. A growing consensus among excerpts indicates that the brain cannot distinguish between a threat to physical survival versus a threat to emotional safety. The psychological toll of walking on eggshells around an abusive partner or sensitive friend registered in the central nervous system as a state of prolonged danger, where the brain activates the infamous "fight-or-flight". These conditions lead to elevated cortisol levels for long periods of time and systemic inflation that compromises overall neurological health.

At the center of all of this is the amygdala, a pair of small, almond-shaped clusters of nuclei located deep in the brain, which is responsible for regulating fear responses and aggression. When an individual is subjected to the unpredictable highs and lows of a toxic relationship—such as intense praise and affection followed by sudden emotional withdrawal—the amygdala has to remain in a state of hyper-activation at all times.



The constant flood of stress hormones throughout the brain and body actively impairs the functioning of the prefrontal cortex, which is the brain's region for logic, executive functioning, and emotional regulation. Over time, this "hijack" leaves individuals feeling chronically disorientated, hyper-vigilant, sensitive, and prone to severe cognitive fatigue.

Furthermore, it has been found that unhealthy relationships use the exact same neural pathways involved in substance addiction. In healthy bonds, neurotransmitter chemicals like dopamine and oxytocin are released in stable, predictable patterns. These increase happiness and connection levels. In contrast, situationships thrive on something called an "intermittent reinforcement schedule." Because the validation or affection is unpredictable, the brain becomes obsessed with chasing the next emotional "high." When a negligent partner finally texts back or offers time together after days of ghosting someone, it triggers a massive spike of dopamine. This repeated pattern creates an addictive "trauma bond" that makes it biologically difficult to leave the situation, even when a person knows, logically, they should.

The physical consequences of this prolonged state are immense. Longitudinal brain imaging shows that chronic relational stress can lead to the atrophy, or shrinking, of the hippocampus—an area of the brain vital for learning, memory formation, and storage. In physical and complex trauma, many of the changes are similar: when individuals go through a severe relational fracture or a friendship suddenly ends badly, the brain activates the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex—the exact same region that processes physical pain—meaning a broken bond hurts the brain in the same manner as a physical injury would.



Despite the obvious neurological impacts, many individuals face significant social pressure to downplay the severity of non-physical relationship trauma. In "situationships" or ambiguous friendships, the lack of an official label often causes victims to minimize their own distress, leading to prolonged exposure to toxic behavior. The self-convincing only turns the stress into a chronic condition as the brain continuously suppresses neuroplasticity and drains its cognitive reserves.

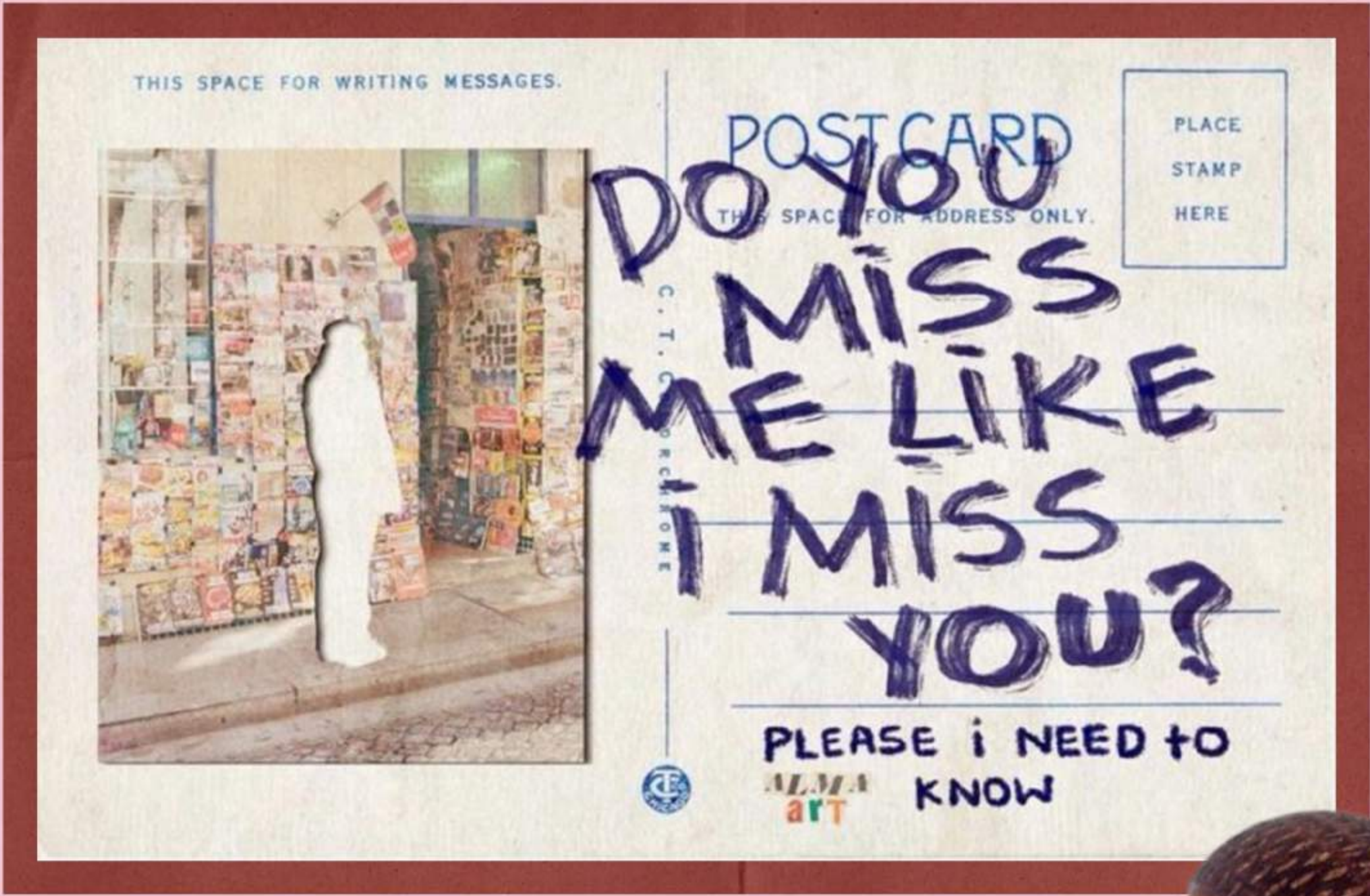
To heal and essentially navigate these disruptions in mental health, clinical experts emphasized that simply leaving the relationship is only the first step: the damaged brain requires active and consistent rewiring. Effective recovery should focus on regulating the nervous system through mindfulness practices, and in more extreme cases, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to rebuild the weakened prefrontal cortex. Reestablishing safe, predictable, and securely attached social connections can stimulate positive neuroplasticity, which can help to restore emotional balance.

Ultimately, the goal of understanding neuroscience behind relationships is to shift from shame to awareness. If more individuals are able to understand the impacts their lives may have on their brains, they may be inspired to reclaim their autonomy and protect their peace.

Claire Yoon

Dear friends

I don't talk to anymore....



We don't talk anymore, but there are mornings when I return to the house we built. And I still walk past it in my mind sometimes.

Its walls remain intact, but the air is stale now, silting in the corners like dust left unswept. The lights, once an ethereal honeyed gold, have surrendered to silence. I press my hand on the doorknob and feel the faint residue of us. I can't remember who left first.

I don't think we ever realize, in the moment, that we're saying goodbye for good. We imagine distance as temporary—a few missed texts, a forgotten plan—but not as the gradual dismantling of something that once felt infinite. It's almost comical how permanence fools us, how we believe certain people are unlosable simply because we cannot fathom losing them.

Lately, my mind has been lingering on simple inquiries. Are you taller than me now? Would you shave your head for a million dollars? I find myself clinging to questions that expect nothing in return. They drift through my precalculus-crowded, chemistry-filled mind, little paper boats on a flood of formulas and deadlines.

But the questions never stay small. By the time I'm sitting in the back of my Humanities classroom, they've begun to warp and stretch, unfurling across the floor in shifting, dizzying patterns, like the morning sun does through the threadbare shades that leak gold onto Mrs. O's desk.





In that light, I see Icarus—the boy haloed in radiant ruin. He rises, luminous and fragile, until the sky itself seems to wane beneath his touch. Then, with a shudder, he fractures, spilling into the sea. The myth does not drift above me. It descends, settling into the quiet space beside my desk.

Around me, voices bloom in soft discord, the sound of my classmates debating his hubris, his hunger, his heat. Pride, they say. Foolishness, they insist.

But my silence swells thick in my throat; I can only think of the fall. It was his fall, I realize, that sculpted his flight into form. Had he not fallen, would we have remembered him at all? Would he be anything more than a passing anecdote? Perhaps, without the surrender, his wings would have been mere ornament, his soaring nothing more than a rehearsal for the inevitable.

You may wonder why I'm telling you this, but it was in that moment that I realized something: a fall is not merely an error in judgment but the moment that transforms action into narrative. It is the point at which experience crystallizes into memory, and memory into truth. Icarus didn't become immortal because of his flight. In a paradox almost cruel, he lives because he died.

You should know that at night, I lie awake, watching as the questions grow larger, swirling in the dark until they tower over me. With every answer I attempt, I become Sisyphus—condemned to push a stone up the endless slope of my own unfinished thoughts. I strain and struggle, forcing each question to the summit of that mountain of 'almost's and 'what-if's, only to watch it tumble back down again.

It rolls and rolls, faster each time, until it finds its way to the doorstep of our abandoned house, the very place I had been trying to push it away from.

It knocks once against the empty doorframe, echoing through all the rooms we once filled. As I descend, chasing the stone I can never master, I finally understand the cruelty of my task: the question I can't outrun.



So instead, I ask it plainly. Had we not fallen, if our wings had held, would we have felt anything more than a fleeting glimpse of something bright and unreachable? I step inside, and the familiar spaces stretch around me, greeting me with soundlessness.

And in that stillness, I begin to understand.

Not every house has to be lived in forever. Some are meant to shelter us for a while, to teach us what belonging feels like before we learn to find it elsewhere.

And so, in my mind, I leave the porch light burning. Not as an invitation, but as an acknowledgement. The air still remembers us, I think. And that's enough.

Signed,

A friend you no longer know



How do Gender Stereotypes Affect Teen Friendships?

Alina Liu



Picture the setting of a school lunch. Now picture a group of teenage boys sitting together. They joke loudly, tease one another, and quickly change the subject whenever emotions arise. Nearby, a group of girls discuss their worries about school and relationships, comforting one another through long conversations. While these scenes may seem ordinary, they reveal something deeper within this society: from a young age, society teaches boys and girls different "rules" about friendship. These unwritten expectations, the gender stereotypes, not only influence who teenagers become friends with but also how they communicate, express emotions, and support each other. In many ways, gender stereotypes quietly shape some of the most important relationships during adolescence.

Gender stereotypes are beliefs about how males and females are expected to behave in our current society. Boys are often encouraged to be independent, confident, and competitive, while girls are expected to be caring, expressive and relationship-oriented. One of the most noticeable differences is in emotional expression. Many boys grow up hearing phrases such as "man up" or "boys don't cry." On the other hand, girls are more exposed to expressions such as "good girl" or "act like a lady". Although these stereotypes are gradually changing, they continue to influence teenagers through family expectations, social media, school environments and popular culture. Adolescence is a particularly vulnerable stage because friendships become central to identity, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. When stereotypes dictate how teenagers "should" behave, friendships can become restricted by expectations rather than genuine personality.

Boys may avoid discussing anxiety, loneliness or insecurity with friends, fearing they will appear weak. Thus, emotional support is often replaced by humour, shared activities or playful teasing. While these interactions can strengthen friendships, they may also discourage boys from seeking help when they struggle with their mental health.

Girls, on the other hand, are generally encouraged to share emotions and provide emotional support. Female friendships are often characterised by deeper conversations and greater emotional intimacy. However, this expectation can also create pressure. Girls may feel responsible for constantly supporting friends, maintaining harmony or avoiding conflict. At times, emotional closeness can become emotionally exhausting, especially when friendships involve comparison, gossip or social pressure. Gender stereotypes also influence who teenagers feel comfortable befriending. Cross-gender friendships often face unnecessary judgement. A boy and a girl spending time together may immediately be assumed to be romantically interested in each other, making some teenagers hesitant to form genuine platonic friendships. This limits opportunities to learn from different perspectives and reinforces the wrong idea of how boys and girls naturally belong in separate social groups. As society becomes more aware of gender diversity, these traditional assumptions increasingly fail to reflect the reality of teenage relationships.

Social media has even further amplified these stereotypes. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram constantly present idealised versions of masculinity and femininity. Boys are often portrayed as athletic and emotionally detached, while girls are expected to be attractive, sociable and emotionally available. Viral trends and influencers reinforce these expectations, encouraging teenagers to perform gender rather than simply express themselves. Online popularity can also shape friendship groups, with many adolescents feeling pressure to fit gendered expectations to gain acceptance.

Fortunately, these attitudes are changing. Schools increasingly encourage discussions about mental health, emotional literacy and gender equality. Campaigns promoting positive masculinity challenge the idea that emotional expression is a weakness, while growing awareness of diversity encourages teenagers to value individuality over stereotypes. Many young people today are redefining friendship by rejecting traditional expectations and supporting one another regardless of gender.

Ultimately, friendships should be shaped by trust, kindness and mutual respect, not by outdated ideas of how boys and girls are supposed to behave. Gender stereotypes may still influence teenage relationships, but they do not determine them. As more teenagers question these “rules,” they create friendships that are stronger, healthier and more inclusive. In doing so, they demonstrate that the best friendships are built not on gender, but on genuine human connection.



The Friendship Gap:



How Gender stereotypes affect Teenage Friendships

Tansy Lau

Friendships are one of the most important parts of adolescence. They provide emotional support, help teens build confidence, and create a sense of belonging. However, the way teenagers experience friendships is often influenced by gender stereotypes—the expectations society places on how boys and girls should think, behave, and express themselves. While these stereotypes may seem harmless, researchers say they can affect the quality of friendships, limit emotional expression, and even impact mental health.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, healthy friendships help adolescents develop communication skills, self-esteem, and resilience while reducing feelings of loneliness and stress. Gender stereotypes are socially-created beliefs about how boys and girls are expected to act. Boys are often expected to be strong, independent, and emotionally tough, while girls are often expected to be caring, emotional, and socially connected. According to UNICEF, these expectations are learned through family, media, schools, and culture, and they can shape how young people interact with others throughout adolescence.

These stereotypes can affect boys' friendships in several ways. Many boys grow up believing they should not cry, ask for help, or openly discuss their emotions because doing so might make them appear weak. As a result, some boys may avoid sharing personal struggles even with close friends. Instead, they often build friendships around shared activities such as sports, gaming, or other hobbies. While these friendships can be meaningful, researchers suggest that social pressure may discourage emotional openness.



Recent research published in *European Psychiatry* found that friendships are one of the most important sources of support during adolescence. The study also found differences in how adolescents of different genders seek support from friends and how helpful they perceive that support to be, highlighting the importance of understanding friendship dynamics rather than relying on stereotypes.

Girls also face stereotypes that can influence their friendships. Society often expects girls to maintain close emotional relationships and be highly involved in their friends' lives. While emotional openness can strengthen friendships, girls may also experience pressure to constantly support others or maintain "perfect" friendships. Social media can increase these pressures by encouraging comparison, making disagreements more visible, and creating unrealistic expectations about friendships.

Research summarized by *Nature Index* suggests that high-quality friendships are associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents. These friendships are characterized by trust, emotional support, and healthy communication. However, unhealthy friendship patterns, such as excessive conflict or constant comparison, can negatively affect mental health.

Gender stereotypes do not affect only boys or girls individually—they also influence friendships between different genders. For example, boys and girls who become close friends may face teasing or assumptions that they are dating. These reactions can discourage cross-gender friendships even though they provide opportunities to understand different perspectives and develop stronger communication skills.

Experts argue that stereotypes can also prevent teens from seeking support when they need it most. UNICEF encourages young people to build healthy relationships by communicating openly, managing emotions, and supporting friends without judging them based on gender expectations. Learning these skills helps create friendships based on trust instead of stereotypes.

Schools also play an important role in reducing the effects of gender stereotypes. Teachers, coaches, and counselors can encourage students to express themselves, resolve conflicts respectfully, and

support classmates regardless of gender. Clubs, sports teams, and group projects can also provide opportunities for students to build friendships with people who have different interests and backgrounds.

Many experts believe that today's teenagers are already challenging traditional ideas about friendship. Boys are becoming more willing to discuss mental health, while girls are increasingly supporting one another in healthy, balanced ways rather than feeling pressured to compete. Social media campaigns promoting kindness, inclusion, and mental health awareness have also helped normalize conversations about emotions and friendship.

Ultimately, friendships should be built on respect, honesty, and support—not outdated stereotypes. Every teenager deserves the freedom to express emotions, ask for help, and build meaningful relationships without worrying about whether their behavior fits traditional gender expectations. By recognizing and challenging these stereotypes, schools and communities can help create stronger friendships that benefit everyone's well-being.





[slowmotiongli/Shutterstock](#)

Animal friendships are similarly like our own

When you think of friendship, what comes to mind? Is it a phone conversation that lasts late into the night? Watching a movie and sharing a pizza? Enjoying some laughs over a beer? Friendship is a central part of the human experience. Our stories, our songs and our conversations are fabrics woven with threads of friendship.

In scientific terms, two people are considered friends if they consistently prefer each other over other individuals. Humans aren't the only ones who form friendships, though.

Two baby Bonobo sitting on the grass. [Gudkov Andrey/Shutterstock](#)



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It may not shock you that our closest relatives, such as chimpanzees and bonobos, make friends. But species throughout the animal kingdom, from birds and fish to horses and dolphins, have pals too. And you might be surprised to learn just how much they resemble our own human friendships.

Birds of a feather

When you think about your own friends, you might realise that you are alike in one way or another. Maybe you grew up in the same town and went to school together, share hobbies or have similar jobs.

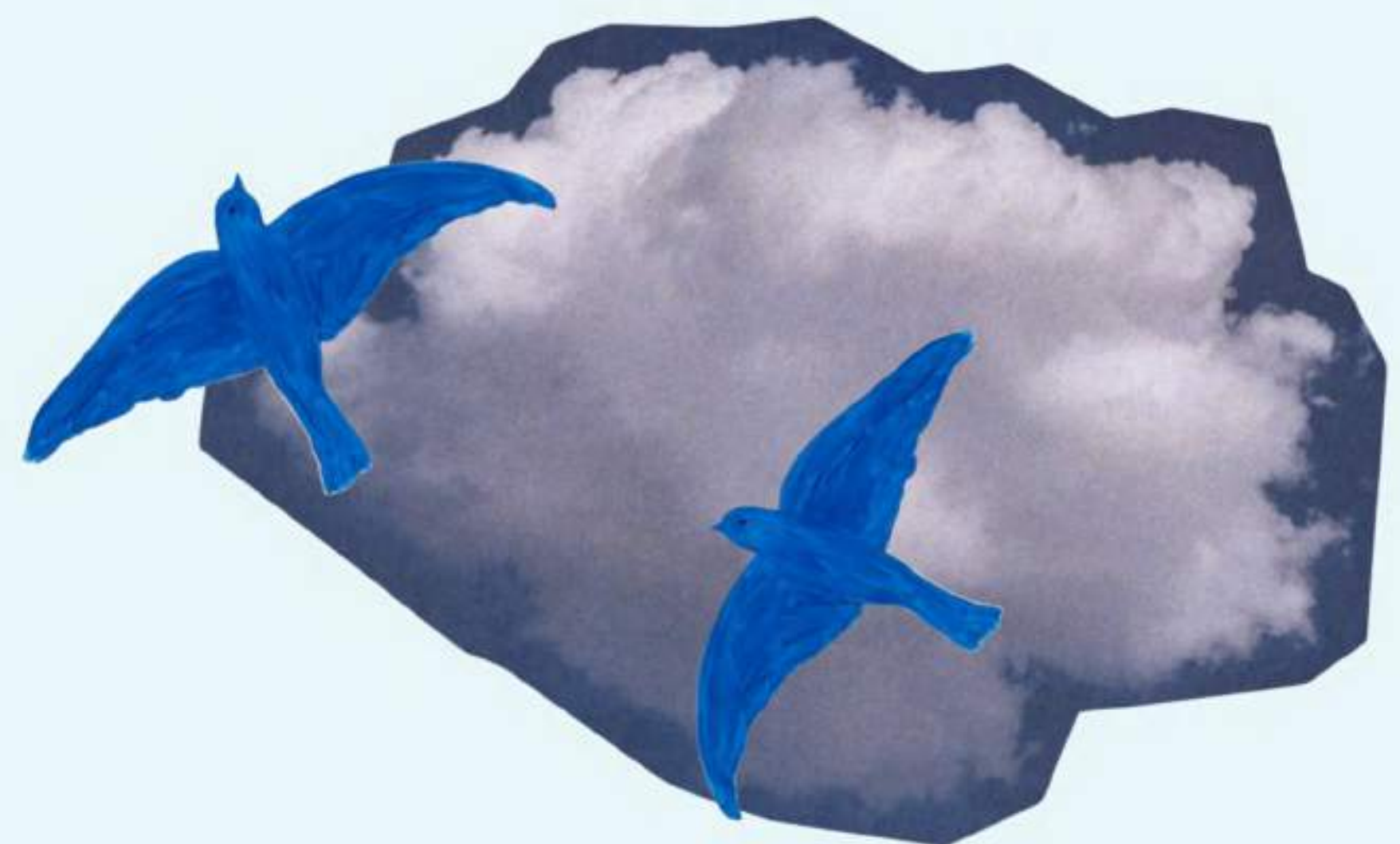
This inclination for similarity, or what scientists call “homophily”, is not exclusive to humans. It is thought this preference for similarity increases the predictability and trust of a friend. Monkeys, zebras, marmots, elephants, and whales all show a preference for interacting with group mates close in age to them. One of the most established homophilic tendencies is an affinity for others who share the same genes: for kin. Across the animal kingdom, species show a predilection for interacting with relatives. So despite those stubborn sibling rivalries, family can be some of the very best friends you have.



Marmots like their friends to be close to them in age. Tadeas Skuhra/Shutterstock

It's physical

When we consider the importance of touch for relationships, we often think about romantic partners. But physical connection can be equally important for any kind of relationship



Rooks preen their friends. stockphoto mania/Shutterstock

Our animal counterparts show us just how important physical touch can be. Some of the behaviours that animals engage in to form and maintain friendships are quite hands-on. Rooks gently preen friends with their beaks, while monkeys groom pals with their hands. These behaviours aren't so different from how we humans embrace our friends.

In some animals though, friendship rituals can look wild. White-faced capuchins greet their best buds by sticking their fingers in each other's eye sockets. Male Guinea baboon test their bonds by fondling each other's genitals.

So, while we don't recommend poking the eye sockets of your friends, a hug the next time you greet your best friend may not go amiss.

Distance is a barrier

Animals provide many examples of how friendships can flourish even when pals are apart. Dolphins foster closeness by exchanging calls with other dolphins across long distances. Dolphin whistles can travel up to 740 meters to help preserve long-distance attachments. Many primates, including lemurs, Japanese macaques, bonobos and chimps use vocalisations to sustain social bonds.

Friendships can even form in species that actively avoid one another. North American red squirrels are territorial, meaning they each defend their own homes and rarely come into contact apart from mating.

But scientists have shown squirrels who live next to each other for a long time develop friendships that help them live longer and have more babies. The longer these squirrels live close to the same neighbour, the more they relax and spend less time and energy defending their territory.

These dolphins look like a friendly bunch.
Andrea Izzotti/Shutterstock



While in the past friends were formed with those we spent physical time with, international travel, social media and video calls have changed the way we connect. Although human friendship has begun to look a little different, especially since the COVID pandemic, our animal counterparts suggest that good friendships can be nurtured even at a distance.



Literal lifesavers

Friendship evolved because it helps us, whether we are human or not. Animals (including humans) who have allies live longer and healthier lives by helping their companions deal with challenges. Comrades can offer support in times of conflict and provide protection against threats like predators and food shortage.

This can prevent injuries and death. For example, socially integrated killer whales and wolves are more likely to survive when food is scarce than those on the edges of their groups. This is because their friends share food and social information about where to find it.



Two grey wolves playing. [Raphael Rivest/Shutterstock](#)

We still have much to learn about animal friendship and some scientists are devoted to deepening our understanding of animal social bonds. Modern human life tends to be far removed from risks such as being hunted by bears and wolves, but the bottom line still holds true.

Humans make friends because there are mutual benefits. Those perks might be a shoulder to cry on, a babysitter to watch our kids, or a heads up about job opportunities. As whales, birds and primates prove, friends help us. Without them we are less likely to survive and thrive.



A Friend who's more boss than BFF may be harmful for teen's mental health

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originally on The
Conversation

The Big Idea

Teens with domineering friends are at heightened risk for mental health problems, according to our new research.

Dominant friends often harness decision-making power – for instance, dictating which classmates their friends should follow on Instagram. They can also exert behavioral control, like by making the subordinate friend go to a party they don't want to attend.

Friendships are extremely important relationships for teens, but are they always a positive influence? We are psychology researchers interested in the potential psychological consequences of having dominant friends. We suspected that being part of this kind of friendship with a peer might make adolescents feel worthless or distressed.

To investigate, we surveyed 388 adolescents at U.S. high schools five times across one year. Each time, we asked our teen participants to answer questions about their close friends' dominating behaviors: Do they make all the decisions? Do they always get their way?

Consistent with our predictions, we found that when adolescents felt powerless in their close friendships – like their friends always “called the shots” – they experienced lower self-esteem and more symptoms of depression or anxiety.



Why it Matters

Adolescence is a high-risk time for the onset of psychological disorders; rates of depression and anxiety tend to rise during the teenage years. Supportive and equitable friendships can positively affect teen mental health, but our new research reveals a potential dark side to some close friendships.

Although some teens might be OK going with the flow and letting their friends take the reins, our study found some of the first evidence that this kind of unequal relationship can be psychologically harmful. Healthy friendships should offer both partners opportunities to have a say and make decisions.

Our findings suggest that it's important to teach teens how to establish healthy, equitable friendships. One friend shouldn't consistently feel bossed around or powerless. Also, adolescents may benefit from receiving help in developing effective communication tools for asserting their wants and needs to their close friends.



Teens might need help recognizing the downsides of a lopsided friendship. [whereslugo/Unsplash](#), CC BY

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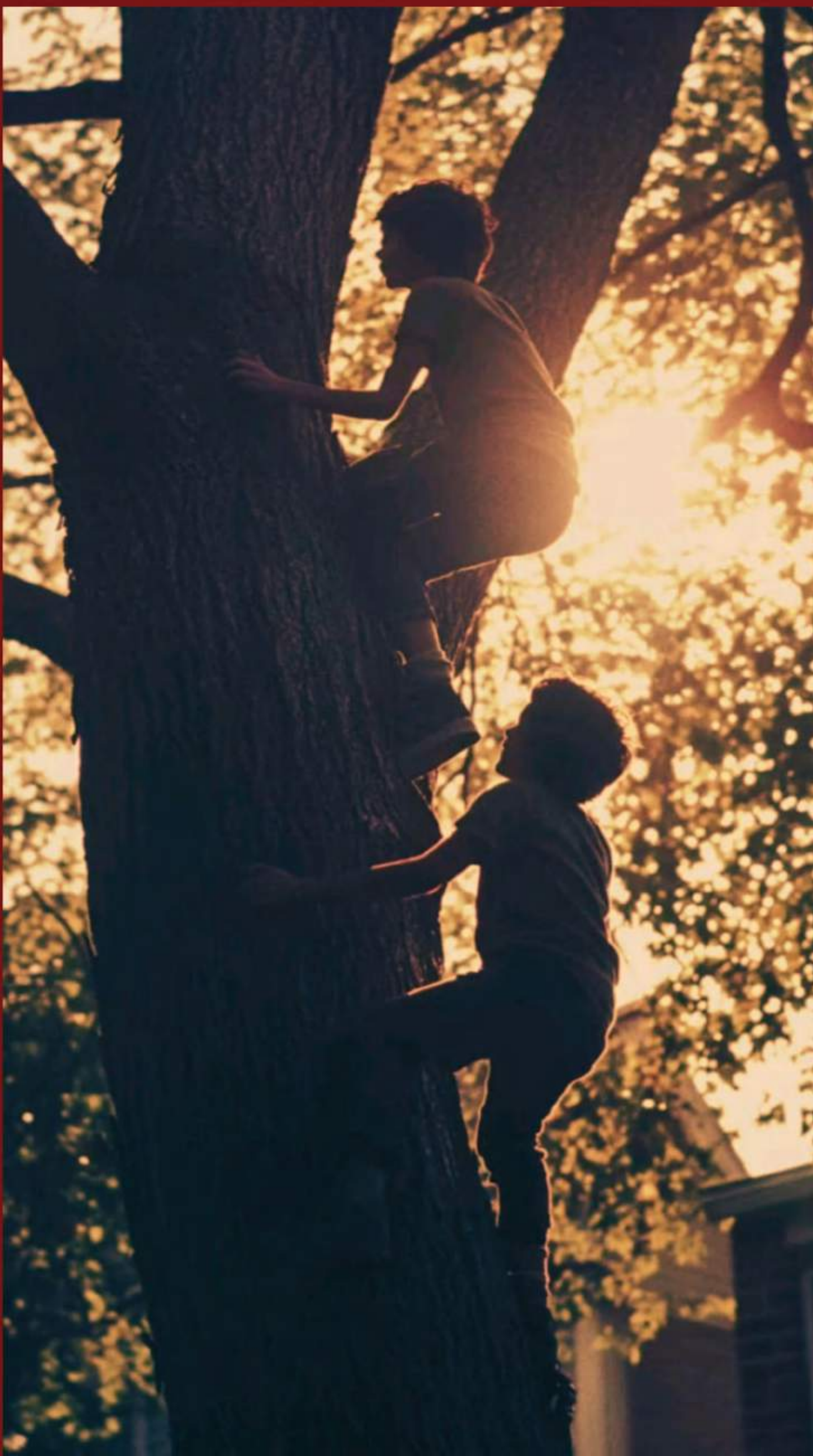




What still isn't known

There is still a lot to learn about how power dynamics in friendships affect teen mental health. For example, is it better to have dominant friends than no friends at all? Does having several supportive friends negate the harm of having one dominant friend? And are there reasons some teens might be more likely than others to end up in these lopsided friendships? For example, it's possible that personality plays a role, with more introverted teens gravitating toward more assertive peers, and vice versa.

We also need to learn more about the best ways to effectively intervene. Many programs are designed to promote healthy teen romantic relationships, but far fewer address healthy teen friendships. Recognizing that friendships are not unequivocally protective is an important first step in helping teens reap their benefits and avoid their costs.





Are people lying more since the rise of social media and smartphones?

David Markowitz

Assistant Professor of Social Media Data Analytics, University of Oregon

Published: November 8, 2021 2.10pm EST originally on **The Conversation**

Technology has given people more ways to connect, but has it also given them more opportunities to lie?

You might text your friend a white lie to get out of going to dinner, exaggerate your height on a dating profile to appear more attractive or invent an excuse to your boss over email to save face.

Social psychologists and communication scholars have long wondered not just who lies the most, but where people tend to lie the most – that is, in person or through some other communication medium.

A seminal [2004 study](#) was among the first to investigate the connection between deception rates and technology. Since then, the ways we communicate have shifted – fewer phone calls and more social media messaging, for example – and I wanted to see how well earlier results held up.

The link between deception and technology 🤔 🔗

Back in 2004, communication researcher [Jeff Hancock](#) and his colleagues had 28 students report the number of social interactions they had via face-to-face communication, the phone, instant messaging and email over seven days. Students also reported the number of times they lied in each social interaction.

The results suggested people told the most lies per social interaction on the phone. The fewest were told via email.

The findings aligned with a framework Hancock called the “[feature-based model](#).” According to this model, specific aspects of a technology – whether people can communicate back and forth seamlessly, whether the messages are fleeting and whether communicators are distant – predict where people tend to lie the most.

In Hancock's study, the most lies per social interaction occurred via the technology with all of these features: the phone. The fewest occurred on email, where people couldn't communicate synchronously and the messages were recorded.

The Hancock Study, revisited 📖 🔍

When Hancock conducted his study, only students at a few select universities could create a Facebook account. The iPhone was in its early stages of development, a highly confidential project nicknamed "Project Purple."

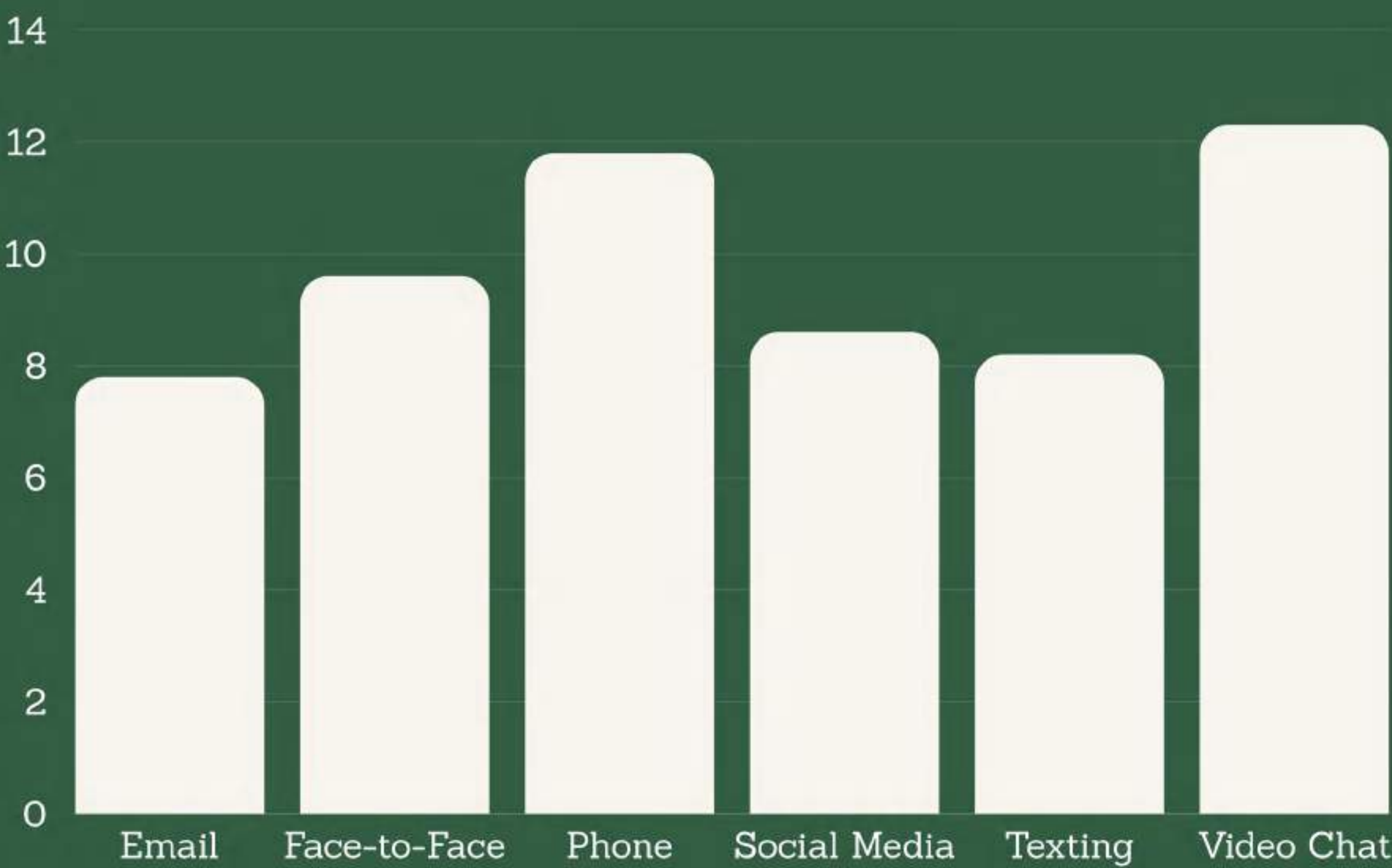
What would his results look like nearly 20 years later?

In a new study, I recruited a larger group of participants and studied interactions from more forms of technology. A total of 250 people recorded their social interactions and number of interactions with a lie over seven days, across face-to-face communication, social media, the phone, texting, video chat and email

As in Hancock's study, people told the most lies per social interaction over media that were synchronous and recordless and when communicators were distant: over the phone or on video chat. They told the fewest lies per social interaction via email. Interestingly, though, the differences across the forms of communication were small. Differences among participants – how much people varied in their lying tendencies – were more predictive of deception rates than differences among media.

The rate of lying across different forms of communication

Source: David M. Markowitz



Despite changes in the way people communicate over the past two decades – along with ways the COVID-19 pandemic changed how people socialize – people seem to lie systematically and in alignment with the feature-based model.

There are several possible explanations for these results, though more work is needed to understand exactly why different media lead to different lying rates. It's possible that certain media are better facilitators of deception than others. Some media – the phone, video chat – might make deception feel easier or less costly to a social relationship if caught.

Deception rates might also differ across technology because people use some forms of technology for certain social relationships. For example, people might only email their professional colleagues, while video chat might be a better fit for more personal relationships.

Technology Misunderstood 🖥️ ⚡

To me, there are two key takeaways.

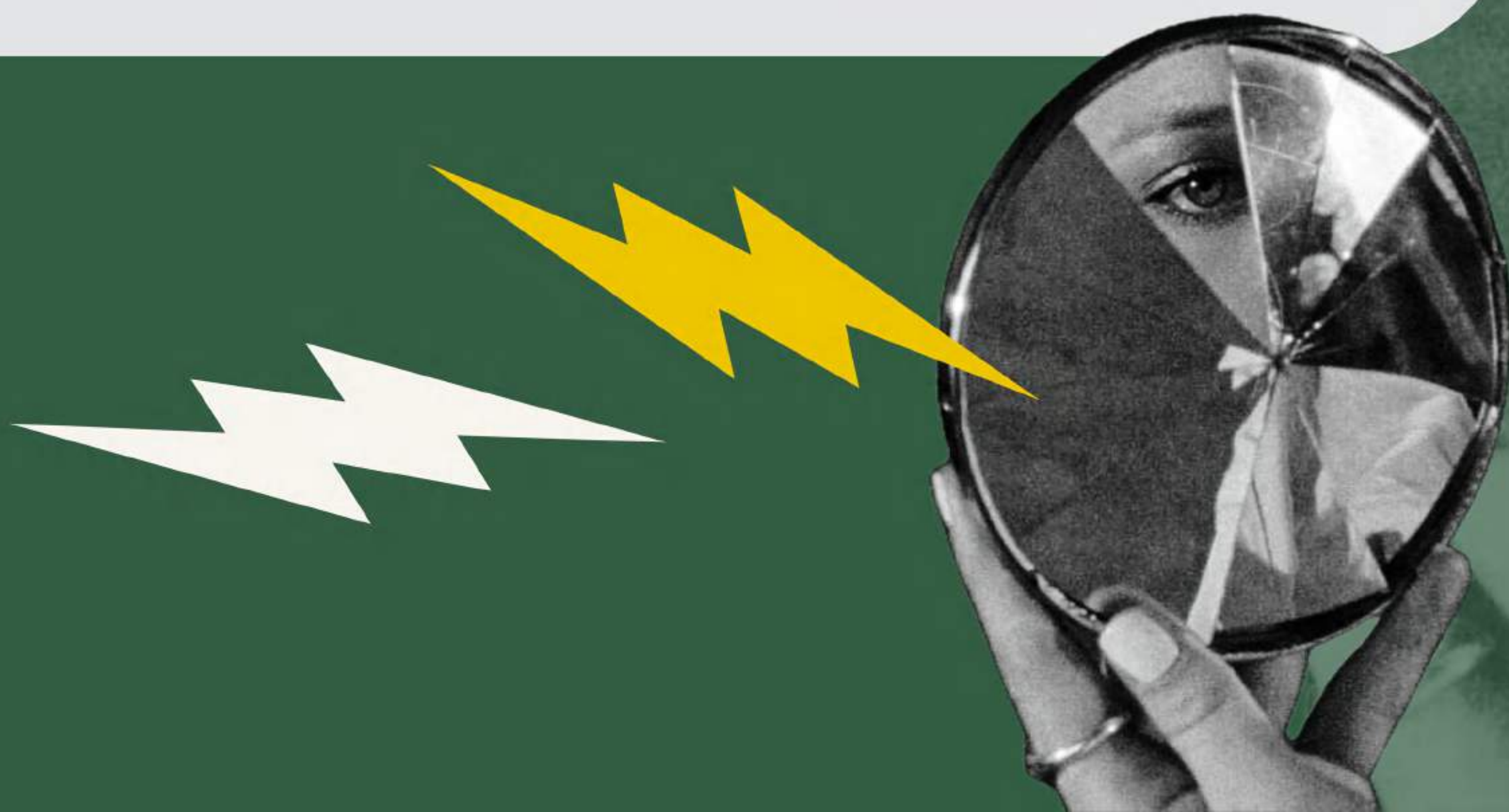
First, there are, overall, small differences in lying rates across media. An individual's tendency to lie matters more than whether someone is emailing or talking on the phone.

Second, there's a low rate of lying across the board. Most people are honest – a premise consistent with truth-default theory, which suggests most people report being honest most of the time and there are only a few prolific liars in a population.

Since 2004, social media have become a primary place for interacting with other people. Yet a common misperception persists that communicating online or via technology, as opposed to in person, leads to social interactions that are lower in quantity and quality.

People often believe that just because we use technology to interact, honesty is harder to come by and users aren't well served.

Not only is this perception misguided, but it is also unsupported by empirical evidence. The belief that lying is rampant in the digital age just doesn't match the data.





Alisha Wang

FRIENDSHIP

Not loud like thunder, not bright like flame,
but steady as a heartbeat that remembers your name.
It's the silence that doesn't feel cold or wide,
but a calming "I'm here" on your hardest side.

It's shared laughter that doesn't need to explain,
the kind that still lingers after the rain.
It's knowing someone won't let you fall too far,
even when distance stretches who you are.

It's the truth said softly when you need it most,
not empty praise or a fading ghost.
It's showing up when the world feels thin,
and helping you find your way back in.

So here's to the ones who stay through the shift:
not just company, but a kind of gift.
Because life is lighter, however it bends,
when it's held together by real friends.



From Stranger The Science

To “Bae” Behind Finding your People



Grace Guan

Think about the last time you met someone new. Maybe it was the first day of school, the first practice of a season, or maybe you sat next to someone who you had never talked to before. During that time, they were just another person in the room. But, sometimes, months or even years later, that one stranger is actually because the first people you call when something exciting happens, the person who understands your jokes without explanation or the person who you know will always be there.

But what actually turns a stranger into a best friend?

Friendship often feels random. Some people say they just clicked with someone, but psychologists and researchers suggest there is much more happening than we might think. The friendships people build are actually much more influenced by psychology, biology, and the environments they spend time in.

1. Do we need friends?

Friendship is not just about having someone to sit with at lunch or someone to hang out with on weekends. Scientists have found the meaningful relationships can have a major impact on people's mental and physical health.

According to the American Psychological Association, strong social connections are linked to improved emotional well-being, lower stress levels and greater overall life satisfaction. As mentioned in the article, Catherine Bagwell, who is a psychology professor said: “In the face of life's challenges, having a close friend to turn to seems to be a buffer or protective factor against some of the negative outcomes we might otherwise see...”



This may explain why friendship feels so important during stressful moments. Whether it's dealing with academic pressure, family challenge, or personal struggles, having someone supportive can make a difficult situation feel more manageable.

From a biological perspective, humans are naturally social. Throughout history, forming strong groups has helped people survive. Today, people may not rely on friendships for the same reasons, but the brain still recognizes connection as something that is essential. Friendship is something people are built to seek in this world.

2. Who do we become Friends with?

Despite the idea that "opposites attract," friendships usually form between people who have something in common.

Researchers describe this pattern as homophily, which means people are more likely to form relationships with individuals who are similar to them. Shared interests, values, experiences, and background can all make people feel more comfortable around one another.

This explains why friendships often begin in places where people already have something connecting them. Teammates bond over practices and competitions. Classmates become friends after working on projects together. Club members connect over similar passions. This is the concept of proximity.

3. Where do friendships start?

For many children, school is where some of the most important friendships begin. Being around the same people every day creates opportunities for connection. Psychologists call this the mere exposure effect, which states that people develop a preference for people/things that they are familiar with. This explains how certain people often develop stronger feelings towards others simply because they see them repeatedly. A person sitting next to you in math class may start as someone you only exchange notes with but eventually they may become someone you talk to every day. Friendships often grow through hundreds of these small interactions and there is rarely just one moment where someone becomes your best friend.



4. Do People Know Right Away When They've Found a Best Friend?

Movies and television often make friendship look instant. Two characters meet, immediately connect, and suddenly become inseparable. That's not exactly what happens in real life.

A study from the University of Kansas found that friendships develop through time and repeated interaction. Researchers estimated that it takes about 50 hours to move from an acquaintance to a casual friend, around 90 hours to become friends, and more than 200 hours to build a close friendship. This shows how most of the best friendships aren't created overnight. They are built slowly through conversations, experiences, and trust. For many students, this feels familiar; a person who starts as a stranger can eventually become the person who knows almost everything about you.



5. Why do friendships change?

Even strong friendships can face challenges. As people grow older, their lives begin moving in different directions. Friends may go to different schools, move away, become busier, or develop new priorities. Romantic relationships can also change friendships. While spending time with a significant other is normal, friendships sometimes can become harder to maintain when people stop making time for other important relationships.

Social media creates another complicated part of modern friendship. Technology allows people to stay connected instantly, but having constant online contact doesn't always replace spending meaningful time together. Sometimes, friendships end because of conflict. Other times, people simply grow into different versions of themselves.

However, psychologists suggest that not every friendship that fades was unsuccessful. Some friendships are meant to last forever, while others are important for a specific chapter of life.

The People Who Stay

The next time someone who was once a stranger becomes your closest friend, it may seem like luck. But behind that friendship is a combination of explanations made up by psychology, biology, connected experiences, and time. Sometimes, the strongest friendships aren't the ones where people instantly know they have found "their person."





TEAMWORK MAKES DREAMWORK

Celina Xue

Have you ever thought of starting a business but think it's too difficult to start by yourself? Having a co-founder could always help, especially if that person is your best friend. Although challenges can not be prevented altogether, there are many examples of friendships overcoming struggle and creating thriving businesses. Here are a couple of successful companies that were started because of a friendship.

Airbnb

Needing money for rent, roommates and former schoolmates Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia came up with an idea. Inspired by a conference held by the Industrial Designers Society of America, where struggles of finding lodging were brought up by travelers, they decided to place a mattress in their living room in October 2007 and turn it into a bed and breakfast. This attempt was met with success, so Nathan Blecharczyk, Chesky's former roommate, along with the other two co-founders, kickstarted their business idea which they named "AirBed & Breakfast". The company we now know, Airbnb, was officially created in March 2009.

Since then, they have expanded to different countries, including Cuba, France, and Spain, launched new offerings in their website, like opportunities to book activities directly from their platform and a collection of more premium housing options, and became sponsors of the FIFA Club World Cup.

However, they were not always met with constant success and support. In fact, they were met with skepticism by many investors. In meetings where they pitched their ideas, some investors walked out halfway. But Chesky, Gebbia, and Blecharczyk did not take this as a no. Instead they keep the perspective that if they waited for perfection and hesitated, they would've missed many opportunities that helped them grow into what they are now. By working steadily to address problems and building a future they want, Airbnb has become one of the most popular options for short-term housing and stands as the leader of the vacation rental industry, exceeding 8 million active listings in over 220 countries and regions.

Ben & Jerry's

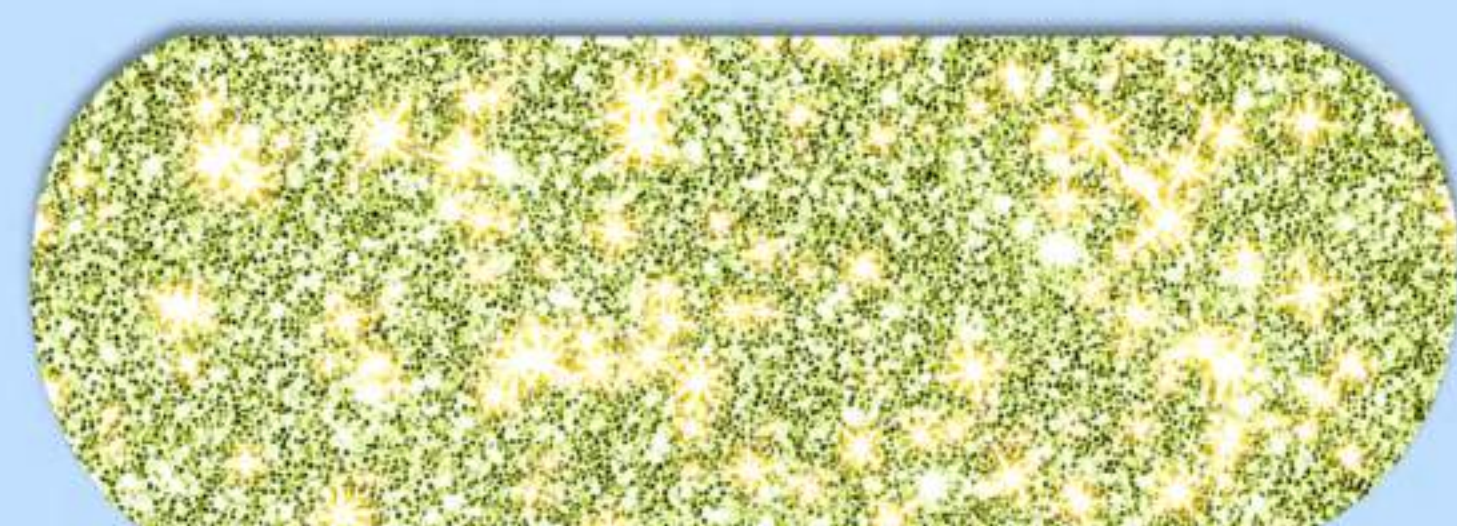
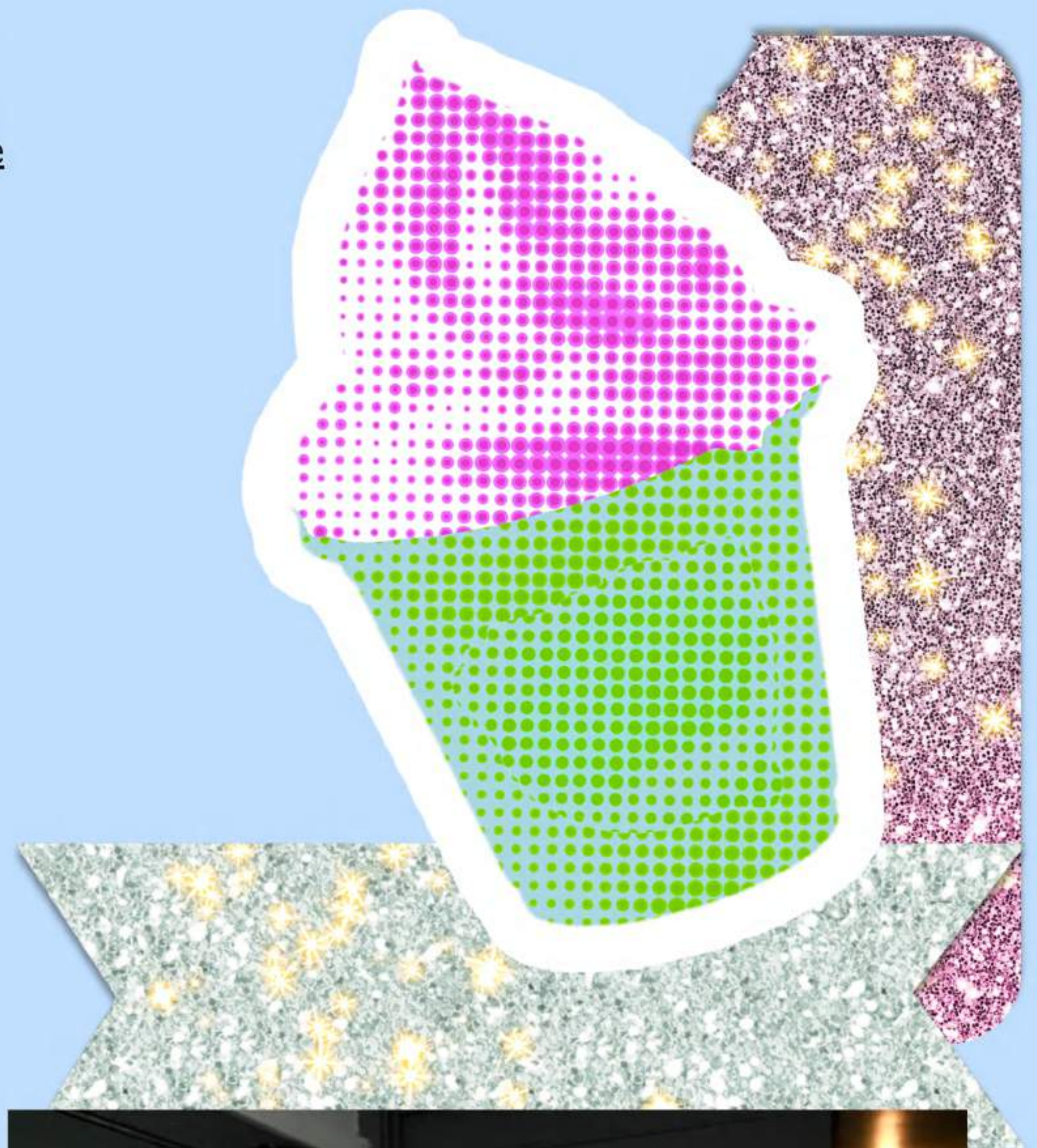
Childhood friends Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield originally planned to start a bagel shop, but they found equipment to be too expensive. Instead, they completed a course on ice cream making at Pennsylvania State University's creamery, and began their ice cream making journey on May 5, 1978 in a renovated gas station in Vermont with a \$12,000 investment. Eventually in 1980, they rented another space to start packing their ice cream in pints and franchises and factories started popping up. Now, Ben & Jerry's owns 29% of the premium ice cream market in the UK and offers 98 different flavors.

Together, Cohen and Greenfield continue to work hard to make the company genuine to what they believe in. After the company's acquisition by The Magnum Ice Cream Co. in 2025, Cohen believes Ben & Jerry's is being restricted in its social activism. As he put it, "Magnum prevented Ben & Jerry's from putting out a post supporting Black History Month... a post calling for a ceasefire in Gaza" and he fears that "the longer this goes on, the more they're destroying the brand equity." Although Magnum, as of April 2026, still refuses to sell Ben & Jerry's, the founders are still protesting unwaveringly for independence to pursue their social mission.

Although some may warn against long-term partnerships with friends that involve money, there are multiple examples of successful business ventures started because of past friendships. Despite facing struggles, these founders still stand confidently for their businesses, what they believe, and ultimately what they wanted to create. With strong teamwork and an idea in mind, anything is possible as long as you are truly passionate.

Bio:

Celina is a current high school junior passionate in finance, business, and uplifting the community. She hopes that through *The Insight Exchange*, she can provide a student-led perspective on key events happening in the business world. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends, volunteering, and hosting community events.



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Organization: SafeFur

Information: Millions of stray animals face harsh winters while shelters struggle with overcrowding. SafeFur is an autonomous, insulated pre-intake shelter that provides food, water, warmth, and remote monitoring, allowing organizations to safely house and track animals before rescue. By reducing pressure on shelters and improving rescue efficiency, SafeFur helps animal welfare organizations care for more animals with the resources they already have. SafeFur, a student-led company, is looking to fill the following positions: Head of Product Development, Head of Animal Welfare and Education, Lead Engineer, Lead Programmer, Research & Testing Lead, Finance Lead, Outreach Lead, Marketing Lead, Social Media Lead, Events Lead, Manufacturing Coordinator, Merchandise & Sales Coordinator, Deployment & Logistics Coordinator, Grant Coordinator, Education Coordinator, and Shelter Relations Coordinator. No experience necessary for most positions. Top positions come with the possibility of hiring your own team!

Deadline: ASAP

Contact info: Email safefurrefuge@gmail.com with a copy of your resume and a list of positions you're interested in.

Organization: FEMME

Information: FEMME is a real statistics based app that trains women to be confident by using timed repetition and AI coaching. Unlike current "self-defense" solutions that are often reactive, our mission is to coach women on red-flag scenario detection and how to look unapproachable before anything happens. Join us on FEMME to scale the world's first proactive app for women and empower the next generation of secure females. FEMME is looking for young women to fill the following positions: Coder (App & Web), Designer (App & Web), Creative Director, App Element Animator, Cinematographer, Clothing Designer (Hoodies), Project Manager, and Sourcing Agent (China).

Deadline: July 31, 2026

Contact info: Email sheisntsorry@gmail.com with a copy of your resume and a list of positions you're interested in.

Organization: Happy Harmonies

Information: We are looking for young musicians in the UK to join a community music project that performs for elderly residents in care homes. Many elderly people are not visited often, so our aim is to use music to make them smile, feel remembered, and bring comfort through familiar songs from their time. This project is completely free for care homes. Alongside this, we may perform at small concerts, gigs, and recitals to raise money for transport, sheet music, equipment, and website costs, so the project can continue and expand. We need musicians who can perform confidently, work as a team, and commit to helping others through music. This is a chance to gain performance experience, build confidence, support the elderly community, and be part of something meaningful. Happy Harmonies is looking to fill the following positions: Vice-President, Project Leader, Head of Social Media, Website Manager, Recruitment Manager, Music Director, Care Home Liaison, Fundraising Manager, and Performers.

Deadline: ASAP

Contact info: Email avi.heglandfisher@leadershipinnovationlab.org to be connected to the founder.

Organization: Melodii

Information: This project is a student-led initiative focused on making music more accessible and understandable, especially for elders in local communities and younger kids who are just starting to explore music. The goal is to start with small, in-person workshops (like in libraries or community spaces), where we introduce music in a really simple and interactive way. At the same time, we're also working toward building a small website that helps guide people through learning and creating their own music. This is still at an early stage, so joining means you'll be helping build something from the ground up!!! It's flexible, collaborative, and a good opportunity to take on leadership roles or try something new!!!!!! This non-profit organization's name is "Melodii." The name is derived from the word "melody," which refers to a sequence of musical notes that are perceived as a single entity. The addition of the double "i" at the end represents inclusivity and interactivity.

Deadline: None

Contact info: melodii.team@gmail.com

Organization: Momentum

Information: Momentum is a student-led nonprofit dedicated to leveling the playing field for low-income athletes. Founded by Emily Liu and Anthony Liu, our organization provides essential training resources for athletes from all sports. Under the leadership of Erin Wang, our Sports Medicine and Injury Recovery branch focuses on improving athlete's longevity and health. Our mission is to improve athletes' health and enhance injury prevention by providing education, resources, and access to sports care for underserved and low-income athletes.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Instagram: @athletes.momentum

Organization: Project Pulses

Information: Project Pulses is an initiative connecting personal experiences of neurodivergent individuals with

the scientific and public health communities. We'll be collecting opinions and personal experience from neurodivergent individuals and their communities, as well as scientific professionals with the goal of investigating how personal experiences can shape approaches in science. The project is seeking an Outreach Coordinator and a Social Media Manager.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Exempli Gratia

Information: Through expert panels, interviews, and networking events, members can connect with real lawyers and law students to gain insight into their future careers. Mock trial practice opportunities are also available to help develop advocacy and public speaking skills, with the goal of organizing legal competitions in the future. Additionally, Exempli Gratia's magazine provides a platform for students to publish legal articles.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: HarmoniEats Initiative

Information: Join HarmoniEats Initiative in our community initiatives to raise awareness and support individuals with food allergies and autoimmune diseases. Your participation can make a real difference in the lives of those in need.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Quest4Clarity

Information: We are dedicated to providing a safe space for your mental wellness. Our platform offers free, high-quality articles, posts, guidance, and webinars tailored to your needs. Join us in advocating for neurological disorders and supporting local services as we work together towards better mental health.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Illustrations of Children's Health

Information: We specialize in creating beautiful illustrations that promote children's health and wellness. Our vibrant and engaging artwork is perfect for children's books, educational materials, and healthcare campaigns.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: *Behavioral Blueprint*

Information: Are you curious about behavioral science, consumer psychology, or the future of AI? Want to unpack how biases, culture, and AI shape—and manipulate—what we click, choose, and buy? The Behavioral Blueprint podcast is growing and looking for motivated collaborators to bring episodes to life!

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: PassNPlay Project

Information: The PassNPlay Project works around the GTA to provide children with the ample resources that they need to play sports. Join us in our mission to promote equal access to sports and encourage physical activity among children.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: International Youth Forum (IYF) 2026

Information: The International Youth Forum is a youth-led interdisciplinary forum for global dialogue and reflection. In 2026, the forum centres on healthy minds, bringing youth worldwide to explore learning, emotion, and social life through cognitive, emotional, and social psychology, and how these processes shape functioning.

Deadline: Unclear

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: 30-Day Me

Information: 30-Day Me is an app designed to help users build habits and achieve personal growth through structured 30-day challenges. 30-Day Me is looking for partnerships with organizations or clubs that can benefit from customized challenge ideas tailored to members' goals.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: FluentFront

Information: FluentFront is a public speaking practice tool designed to help you speak clearly, confidently, and with purpose — no matter the setting. Choose from categories like interviews, debate, Model UN, casual conversation, or even chaotic “brainrot” prompts, then decide how you want to practice.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Vibrant Waves

Information: At Vibrant Waves, we believe in the transformative power of creativity, movement, and community to turn mental health challenges into opportunities for growth. Our mission is to empower children, young adults, and seniors through innovative, holistic programs that integrate journaling, visual arts, music, sports as tools for stress relief, emotional resilience, and self-discovery.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: The Sunflower Project

Information: We are a youth-led initiative founded in Vancouver, Canada, passionate about preventing issues like Gender-Based Violence. Our primary audience is younger people who may not have been aware about the severity of such issues. We aim to raise awareness by organizing fundraisers, establishing a social media presence, and collaborating with other organizations to convey our message effectively.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Us and Tomorrow

Information: Us and Tomorrow is a science fiction podcast hosted by Belinda Chen, exploring the intersection of emerging technologies and the human experience. It asks social, ethical, and philosophical questions that arise as science fiction increasingly becomes science reality. It is recruiting student collaborators, all of whom will receive full credit on podcast platforms and social media accounts.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Application](#)

Organization: GUD Medicine

Information: GUD Medicine is a youth initiative tackling complex healthcare issues and fighting for health literacy and justice. It aims to make healthcare more transparent and equitable by breaking down confusing medical insurance systems, comparing drug chemistries, and investigating global healthcare policies.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Instagram](#)

Organization: modern anthologies

Information: modern anthologies is a literary magazine dedicated to finding common ground amongst youths around the world. as founders, writing has been a big part of expressing and coming to terms with who we truly are and where we feel we belong in this world.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: The OpenMind Project

Information: The OpenMind Project is a mental wellness initiative offering resources on mental health to teenagers and young adults, with the goal to break the stigma surrounding mental health and help relieve stress. It is looking for student volunteers passionate about mental health to assist with their mission.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Bright Beats

Information: Bright Beats offers free, inclusive music sessions to children with developmental disabilities and special needs. To scale the project, Bright Beats is welcoming peers to start and lead a Bright Beats chapter at their schools or communities. Bright Beats provides training, flexible hours, and verified service hours.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Night Bloom

Information: Night Bloom envisions a community in which people are informed about light pollution and can combat it in their daily lives, allowing for the preservation of dark skies. They are looking to recruit new members to join the project.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Chinatown Youth Engagement Society

Information: CYES is a non-profit organization made by students who want to help dispel the misconceptions of Chinatown and revitalize its perception as a vibrant part of Vancouver. They are always looking for students interested in joining the project.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Feelustrate

Information: Feelustrate aims to create an emotional exploration platform that integrates science, art, and philosophy. Through this interdisciplinary approach, we strive to make abstract emotions tangible and explorable, helping young people find both an outlet for their feelings and a path toward self-awareness.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: SquashBuddy

Information: SquashBuddy is also actively looking for squash players interested in helping us launch SquashBuddy Centers. These are local hubs built around a concentrated player base, designed to make the app truly useful for finding matches and practice partners in a specific area. In addition to encouraging active app use, center leads help organize events, beginner clinics, and mini-tournaments.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: STEAMLabs

Information: STEAMLabs is a student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit that brings hands-on science nights to under-resourced elementary schools. With nearly 100 high school mentors and 500+ students impacted across 11 U.S. cities, the program is now expanding nationwide. STEAMLabs is currently recruiting chapter leaders, national board members, and web designers. All leadership roles are eligible for monthly stipends of up to \$200, and 100% of funds you raise go back to you—STEAMLabs will match any donations or ad revenue you bring in.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Youth Promise Collective

Information: YPC is a youth-led think tank that aims to gauge the opinions of youth on issues that impact them and magnify their voices. This is done through surveying students at schools across the world on a monthly topic and reporting on their responses and trends observed. Youth Promise Collective is looking for high school students who have an interest in writing and research.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: FoundationMHE

Information: FoundationMHE is a non-profit organization aimed at reducing the stigma around mental health while also providing accessible, pertinent, and innovative resources to educate youth about mental health. FMHE is looking for student authors to write monthly blog posts about topics in mental health (policies, trends, research, etc.) and social media managers.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: International Youth Neuroscience Association | Hong Kong Chapter

Information: We seek to introduce concepts of mental health and psychology through the lens of neuroscience. We aspire to educate and raise awareness of neurological and mental conditions among the Hong Kong public. We also strive to generate interest and facilitate learning about the wonders of the brain and neuroscience generally, connecting the local community with young neuroscientists worldwide.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: SHEGOLF

Information: SHEGOLF: Spotlighting Female Golfers is a blog that seeks to empower the voices of female golfers and to share their experiences and perspectives which can often be overlooked in a male dominated sport. Currently, this project is looking for female golfers who would be interested in contributing by writing an article.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: My Healthcare Buddy

Information: Imagine a world where everyone was constantly sick, and the streets were lined with trash. It's sad to say that our own world is currently headed that way. Personal hygiene is often neglected, people are unaware of how they impact public health, and healthcare workers can't keep up. To alleviate this issue, My Healthcare Buddy is stepping in. We are a youth organization that, instead of spreading disease, spreads information and education.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Global Financial Literacy Initiative

Information: This global financial literacy initiative is dedicated to expanding access to personal finance education for underserved youth worldwide. The program aims to narrow the gap by equipping students with practical tools to build credit, avoid predatory debt, and achieve long-term financial stability. The organization is currently recruiting founding chapter leaders to help drive expansion: chapter president, curriculum lead, outreach lead, and podcast host/media lead.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Email yso@taftschool.org

Organization: Athletes for Tots

Information: Athletes For Tots is a youth-led program that helps students rediscover the fun in sports. It isn't just about exercise and physical health: we emphasize that it's about building confidence and friendships, feeling cool, and healthy habits that last a lifetime! But what truly sets us apart? Our programs are led by top-performing teen athletes competing at national levels.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Lawfully Speaking: Understanding Exploitation Through a Legal Lens

Information: Lawfully Speaking is a free, self-paced course that takes a deeper look at sexual exploitation: how it happens, how it's been understood across history, how the law responds, and how both the exploitation and the legal system impact people. You'll explore key terms and concepts, hear stories about landmark legal cases, learn to differentiate and recognize types of exploitation, and examine global and local legal frameworks.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: EXPOZURE

Information: EXPOZURE is a non-profit that provides support to growing businesses in Manhattan by providing free professional photography services. EXPOZURE needs help with outreach. Students who would be a good fit for this may have an interest in business, communications, writing, social justice, and social media marketing.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Please contact philipzheng200929@gmail.com

Organization: Endeavr.ai

Information: Endeavr.ai, a fast-growing AI-assisted fintech investing platform for young people, is looking for a Social Media and Outreach Manager. Our machine learning based stock analysis company is quickly expanding its clientele, and needs someone to commit ~5 hours a week to working directly with the founding team to create content, draft marketing copy, and help manage new user acquisition. Must have creative expertise and the ability to work independently/remotely. Unpaid.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: CaseFile

Information: CaseFile is a developing website focused on key topics in criminology, including detailed case studies, analyses of recent research and developments in the field, and forensic science techniques. Founded by Maggie, a sophomore at Kang Chiao International School in Taiwan, the project was created to help students interested in criminology find opportunities to explore the field more deeply. Team members can contribute by researching and writing case studies, analyzing forensic science methods, discussing new developments in criminology, or helping coordinate outreach to experts as the project expands.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#) / [Sign-Up](#)

Organization: Starlight

Information: Starlight raises awareness about light pollution and its health impacts, encourages responsible lighting practices, and engages communities in monitoring night sky quality. You can check out their flagship citizen science initiative SkyQI at skyqi.in. Starlight is looking for team members who have a knowledge of stargazing and either a knack for design, a passion for writing, an interest in advocacy, a talent for engineering, or the desire to start your own chapter.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Email starlight.darksides@gmail.com

Organization: Open Lab Initiative

Information: The Open Lab Initiative is a student-led effort designed to expand access to academic research opportunities for high school students. Its goal is to connect students with professors and research groups who are willing to mentor, host lab visits, or offer short-term exploratory experiences. The mission is to remove geographic, socioeconomic, and informational barriers so that every student has the opportunity to understand what research truly looks like and make informed decisions about their academic and professional futures. The Initiative is looking to recruit a University Outreach Marketing Lead, responsible for connecting with universities, professors, and research groups that may be interested in participating; and a Student Outreach Marketing Lead, responsible for connecting with high school students who are interested in gaining research exposure.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Email openlab.initiative@gmail.com

Organization: Youthnovators

Information: Youthnovators is a student-led nonprofit based in Toronto, Canada, dedicated to making business education accessible to young children and inspiring them to explore their passions from an early age. They have hosted workshops with a local Toronto learning centre, launched a chapter at an all-girls elementary school, and are in communication with a partner in Montreal. They also recently introduced a Speaker Series, where business professionals share their experiences with younger students, including a partnership with an expert from Scotiabank. Youthnovators are looking to expand within and beyond Canada by welcoming motivated new team members who are passionate about business and education. Looking for a Program Development Director, Outreach Director and Chapter Leads.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Send your CV to youthnovators@gmail.com

Organization: *Health Without Borders*

Information: *Health Without Borders*, a public health podcast, is on a mission to make public health knowledge accessible and understandable by breaking down complex concepts into everyday language and multilingual episodes. *HWB* envisions a world where health information is not restricted by backgrounds, academic barriers, or language; people feel informed and included in conversations about their own health and daily practices.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Email avi.heglandfisher@ingeniusprep.com to be connected to the project founder.

Organization: The Mortals

Information: The Mortals serves as a platform for burgeoning writers, critical readers, and creative thinkers both within the Basis China Network and beyond, drawn to work that experiments and takes bold risks. We are now accepting submissions for our next issue - whether you like to write fiction, prose, poetry, essays, and anything in between. We're more than excited to hear your voice!

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#) / [Submit](#)

Organization: Period Unlimited

Information: We want a team that isn't afraid to hold back: students who can expose oppression from institutions, cultural norms, and powerful figures, which stigmatize menstrual periods and prevent women from obtaining the medical information and treatment they deserve. Period unlimited is looking for a platform manager, head of outreach, blog writers, and guest speakers/advocates.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Grassroots TX

Information: Grassroots TX is a nonprofit organization that gives students the opportunity to support refugees and communities in need through volunteering, outreach, and service. By joining Grassroots TX, students can help refugees who are adjusting to new environments by providing support, spreading awareness, and building a stronger sense of community for people who have been forced to start over. You don't have to live in the same state — or even the same country — to help. Students can get involved from their own cities by organizing local efforts, raising awareness, connecting their communities to the mission, and helping create support systems for refugees and underserved groups. Grassroots TX gives high school students the chance to do more than just volunteer — it allows them to be part of a global community working to help others. You can gain leadership experience, meet people who share your values, and contribute to a cause that directly helps people build better futures.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: UC Berkeley Haas

Information: Academic Year Startup Launchpad prepares high schoolers from all over the world to build solutions for complex problems. Students work in teams, engaging in exploratory coursework and experiential activities focused on business and entrepreneurship. Weekday cohorts meet virtually twice a week on Tuesdays & Thursdays. Weekend cohort meet every Saturday in person on UC Berkeley Haas Campus, with a requirement of completing weekly pre-requisite coursework. This highly selective program is open to academically motivated high school students, in rising 10th – 12th grades and gap year students.

Deadline: Round 2: 9 August 2026

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Writopia Lab

Information: Our age-based workshops give young writers the opportunity to work on their own pieces alongside a maximum of eight peers. All workshops are guided by a published author or produced playwright who is thoroughly versed in Writopia's student-centric methodology. We run workshops in New York City, Washington, DC, the San Francisco Bay Area, and online.

Deadline: Varies

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: ConfidentWriters.com

Information: ConfidentWriters.com is calling all students to show their literary genius, get published and win big! Your opportunity to win a cash scholarship is here, ready and waiting for you. Have no fear, put away your doubts because you don't have to be an advanced writer to qualify. Grab your computer and let your imagination run wild onto those pages. This is your chance to make your creativity and imagination get the best of you.

Deadline: 9 August 2026

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: ChallengeUS Future Leaders Competition

Information: The ChallengeUS Future Leaders Competition aims to critically engage and amplify youth voices from all over the world in civic ideas and challenges. The competition seeks to find, spotlight, and reward promising future leaders through scholarship prizes and award recognition. Participation in the New Voters x ChallengeUS Future Leaders Competition offers the opportunity to join the ChallengeUS Future Leaders Network (global community of young changemakers), get published in the Stanford Political Review, and secure cash prizes that can be put towards educational and professional pursuits, and gain public recognition for exceptional work.

Deadline: 7 August 2026

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: The STEM Spectrum

Information: Are you a student passionate about Computer Science and STEM accessibility? Lead your state/country's TSS chapter and host a coding camp for kids in your community! We will provide you with all of the resources to host your camp, including step-by-step guides, lesson plans, flyers, email templates, guidance calls, and a network of fellow chapter leads!

Deadline: Rolling

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Young Poets Workshops

Information: Thank you for your interest in joining Young Poets Workshops as an Executive Board Member (essentially, a director)! We're a small team dedicated to bringing accessible creative writing education and community to all young writers passionate about poetry. We welcome all young writers to apply for this position, and are happy to train applicants who have less experience directing community organizations. We're excited to hear from you about your ideas and desire to join the team! Please note that you must be within the ages of 13-22 and be a member of our Discord server to apply for this role.

Deadline: Rolling

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: The Politic Inaugural High School Competition

Information: We are thrilled to announce The Politic's first-ever high school competition. The Politic High School Essay Competition is a summer writing competition organized by The Politic, Yale University's premier undergraduate journal of politics and culture. The Politic invites high school students to engage in original, community-rooted investigative journalism, developing the research and writing skills central to responsible democratic participation. We can't wait to read your work!

Deadline: 14 August 2026

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Dance to Empower

Information: Dance to Empower is a student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with 50+ chapters across 20 states and 5 countries and counting. We believe in the collective power of empowerment with passion and small actions to bridge the educational gap in the arts. DTE aims to break down barriers and create a space where each individual can explore their creativity, build confidence, and find a sense of belonging. Dance should not be limited by socioeconomic or cultural boundaries; rather, it should be an inclusive medium that celebrates all backgrounds and abilities, offering young people a pathway for personal growth, emotional resilience, and community connection.

Deadline: Rolling

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Rise Beyond Anorexia

Information: Rise Beyond Anorexia is a 501(c)3 certified nonprofit organization based in California, USA. We aim to engender awareness, prevention, and early intervention of anorexia and other eating disorders through education, youth outreach, community partnerships, and donations. By applying to become a Chapter Founder, you're stepping into a leadership role that comes with real responsibilities and opportunities to make an impact in your community. Chapters will organize events, run awareness campaigns, post short educational messages, and work directly with RBA to expand our mission worldwide.

Deadline: Rolling

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Cherielle

Information: Cherielle is a youth-led 503(c)(1) nonprofit working to bridge the gender gap in tech by empowering girls in computer science and creating a connected, impactful community. We aim to address and reduce the gender gap in tech. When girls are met with negative attitudes or a total lack of resources, it severely impacts the number of future innovators that we have. Our nonprofit addresses this disparity at its root by providing free and accessible STEM opportunities and resources to girls who have been overlooked, ensuring that a lack of opportunities never stands in the way of a promising future.

Deadline: Rolling

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Youthful Lawyers

Information: Youthful Lawyers is a student-led organization that aims to inspire and encourage young leaders aspiring to become lawyers. Helping youth gain experience in the legal field, Youthful Lawyers is a community for everyone, whether they want to learn more about political science, justice, and other legal concepts or just want to support their peers in a collaborative space.

Deadline: 5 September 2026

Contact info: [Application](#)

Organization: LivingWithEczema

Information: At LivingWithEczema, we bring comfort and confidence to people living with eczema. We share reliable information, personal stories, and resources to help teens and young adults better understand and manage their skin. Eczema affects millions and can impact daily life, from confidence to comfort. Many people feel isolated or misunderstood, creating a gap in awareness and support. We're closing that gap by spreading education and building a supportive community. This helps people feel seen, supported, and empowered to take care of both their skin and their mental well-being.

Deadline: Rolling

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: Rise & Rally Volleyball

Information: Rise & Rally Volleyball is a student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to making volleyball accessible for children with disabilities. Through adaptive clinics led by student volunteers, we help athletes build confidence, friendships, teamwork, and a love for the game in an inclusive environment where every child can succeed. Our mission is simple: Where Every Athlete Rises to Play. As we continue to grow, we're looking for passionate high school and college students who would be interested in starting a Rise & Rally chapter in their own community. We provide the training, resources, and ongoing support needed to launch a chapter. Student leaders bring the enthusiasm and local connections to make it happen. If you know anyone who may be interested in bringing adaptive volleyball to their hometown, we'd love to connect with them.

Deadline: Rolling

Contact info: [Website](#)

Organization: PainMap

Information: PainMap is a preliminary risk-screening tool for basketball athletes ages 12–18 with foot or ankle pain, sprains, landing injuries, running or jumping pain, or gradual training-related symptoms. PainMap is currently looking for users to test the platform.

Deadline: None

Contact info: [PainMap](#) (Chinese & English) // [user feedback study](#) (Chinese only)

Organization: Untitled Nonprofit

Information: There is an emerging nonprofit in the LIL community dedicated to bridging the gap between Western youth and Japanese culture through deep linguistic understanding, expert oral histories, and peer-to-peer community exchange. We are working to shift global perspectives on Japanese media—like anime, manga, and gaming—from surface entertainment toward genuine cultural appreciation and language immersion. To launch this initiative, the founder is seeking a talented web developer/site designer who wants to apply their technical skills to a meaningful cultural cause. Your contribution will directly help them build a multimedia digital repository and an interactive platform for international language learners. The org is also currently seeking passionate student leaders and researchers to join as Content Editor. Your involvement will help them record oral histories with industry experts and connect language exchange students across borders.

Deadline: None

Contact info: Email charles.gao@ingeniusprep.com to be connected to the project founder.

Organization: Hospital Helper

Information: Hospital Helper is a free resource designed to help high school students explore their passion for healthcare. It takes the form of a centralized database featuring opportunities accepting high schoolers across major regions—including SoCal, the Bay Area, Oregon, Washington, and currently in progress are Toronto and New York. Beyond listings, the site offers practical tips and tricks to help students successfully navigate applications and tackle real life problems in hospital volunteering. It's a fantastic way for students to gain real-world experience while making a meaningful impact in our community.

Deadline: N/A

Contact info: [Website](#)

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- S Share your vision.**
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