

“Friendship improves happiness and reduces misery, by doubling our joys and dividing our grief.”
– Joseph Addison

I love this quote because it's so incredibly true. Where would we be without friends? Friends are the people who are our encouragers not our critics, but are also comfortable enough in the relationship to be completely honest. That's one of the most important signs of a true friend. It's someone who will tell you what you NEED to hear rather than what you WANT to hear. The truth is told out of love, with no hidden agenda, because a true friend wants what's best for you. I think the most amazing kind of friendship is a relationship between two people who expect a lot from each other, but never ask for it. I think everyone knows that a real friend is the one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out. Real friendship is extremely rare, so if you have it, cherish it and never let it go. I guess the same thing can be said about relationships, but there is something about friendships that elevates them to the next level. The only way to have a good friend is to be one. Did you know that July 30 was the International Day of Friendship? That makes it a perfect time to provide you with some ways to be a better friend. Remember, a true friend is someone who will be there for you when there's probably somewhere else she'd much rather be.

Yours in health,
Susan Monaco, Certified Health Coach
Health and Wellness by Design
www.healthnwellnessbydesign.com
susan@healthnwellnessbydesign.com

How to Be a Better Friend



Throughout our lives, friends come and go, but the really good ones stick around. True friends are the ones with whom you can go months or even years without talking, but as soon as you reconnect, you pick up right where you left off. I'm blessed to have several people in my life I call true friends. This newsletter is dedicated to them. They know who they are.

There's an old saying that people come into our lives for a season, a reason or a lifetime. Take a look back at your life and you'll find that there are very few people who come for a lifetime. Those are the ones you need to cherish and hold onto. They're the ones for whom you would do anything, no questions asked, and they're the ones who would do the same for you. True friends don't keep track of what they do for you, they just do. That doesn't mean that the friends who come for a season, or perhaps only for just a reason, aren't important, because they too, have a purpose. But their purpose is only temporary.

Many years ago, after my dad died, my family pretty much fell apart. Fortunately, I had a few friends who became my chosen family and helped me through a very rough emotional period. It was my friends who were there when I needed a shoulder on which to cry, an ear to listen or someone to watch my son when I traveled for work. They were the people who were there when I really needed them and were still there when I didn't.

Friends can come from surprising places. They can be your next-door neighbor who becomes the sister you always wished you'd had. They can be the person who has a child on your kid's sports team and you just click. They can be someone you met working out in the gym or on the job.

But with friends, it's not always smooth sailing. As with any relationship, friends can bring support and joy, but they can occasionally bring heartache and strife. Hopefully that discord is temporary. But remember, friendships, like relationships, take work. Here are seven simple suggestions to make friends or improve your friendships.

1. **Make time.** Whether you're feeling blue or are busier than you'd like to be, make time for others. Research suggests that on average, it takes about 50 hours of time together to turn an acquaintance into a friend. That seems kind of high to me, but maybe not. Friendships enhance our health and well-being because they help us feel supported and understood. Friends are definitely worth the time investment. Make time for them even when you don't think you have it. Put this at the top of your to-do list for the rest of 2023.

2. **Put Yourself Out There.** Most people want close friendships, but they don't know how to go about it. Spend some time and energy to find the courage to do something different than what you've been doing. Simple things like making eye contact, smiling and saying hello are good first steps to starting a friendship. Invite someone over for a cup of coffee, a glass of wine, or a walk on a beautiful day. Don't assume someone already has enough friends and doesn't want another one. Don't assume the person you want to invite already has plans. Perhaps that person is nervous about inviting you to do something. But you need to be okay if the person you invited says no because something else is going on. It doesn't mean that person doesn't want to be friends with you. Don't give up. Ask another time.
3. **Open your Eyes.** Friends don't always show up where you think they should be or look like what you imagined. Don't discount someone who is older, younger, richer, poorer, heavier or thinner or even a different sex, race or nationality than what you imagined. Some of my closest friends over the years have been men. Potential friends are everywhere. I met my best friend years ago at an audition. I was there for an acting gig, while she was there for modeling. She was randomly behind me in the line to go inside and we just started chatting. We had an instant chemistry and now over 20 years later, she's still my go-to person for pretty much everything. While we don't see each other much, it doesn't matter one little bit. We know that when we need to talk or need anything at all, we're each other's first call. Potential friends are out there, even in unlikely or unexpected places. Take a class, join a gym, go to a wine tasting or volunteer. You'll probably find there are others who want to make friends as much as you do.
4. **Don't Give Up too Soon.** You won't necessarily bond with someone as soon as you meet. Often this will happen, but every potential friend isn't always *"like at first sight"*. Give the relationship time to blossom and if it's meant to be, it will get stronger. Let potential friends show you their stuff and vice versa. You only get to know someone over time. Old friendships require nurturing too, so don't forget about them or stop working on them! However, if a friendship becomes toxic, end it. It's not easy to end those types of relationships, especially when they're long term, but I've done it several times over the last few years. You deserve better than being friends with someone who wants to bring you down.
5. **Be the Friend You Want.** This goes along with the saying, *"Treat people the way you want to be treated."* Be sincere, compassionate, loyal and honest. Be a good listener. God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. Don't gossip about or betray your friends. That's the worst thing you can ever do and we've probably all been there. Reach out when you know a friend needs you, even if she isn't able to ask or tell you what she needs. If you're a true friend, you'll know something isn't quite right. Be reasonable in what you expect from others. Be willing to forgive, because people make mistakes. If you're really friends, deep down, you'll know they didn't mean it. But as I mentioned above, be willing to let go of a friendship when it isn't working. This can happen to the very best of friends. Friendships should be mutually satisfying and if they're not, be strong enough to say goodbye.
6. **Be willing to say you're sorry.** If you truly did something wrong and you know it, apologize. If the person is really your friend, she'll forgive you. If she's not, she won't. That will tell you it's time to move on.
7. **If a friend hurts you, tell her.** People aren't mind-readers, so if you think a friend has wronged you, speak up. If that person is really your friend, she probably has no idea that you were hurt by something she said or did. Don't wait a week or even a day, because the anger and resentment will grow. Tell the person you're hurt and talk about it. It's not fair to either of you to do otherwise. Friends don't intentionally hurt friends.

I've learned a lot about friendship over the years and the bottom line is this: True friends are hard to find, but they're out there. If you're lucky enough to have one, or more than one, cherish them. Tell them how much they mean to you. They probably know, but I'm sure they'd love to hear it. Trust me, it'll be a win/win for your relationship. In closing, I'll leave you with this quote from Oprah. I'm not at all a fan of her, but she has a fantastic quote about friends: *"Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want, is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down."* Be the friend who's willing to hop on the bus.

Have a wonderful month.