

Looking Closely At Our Friendships To Determine How To Function To Capacity With Others

We read a lot about our live-in relationships and where and how they flourish and/or founder. A step away from those lesson-providing efforts, are the special friendships we have over the years that continue to matter to us and to thrive.

The basic good news is that we don't have to live with our friends! What a blessing!

Beyond that is the need to see what each friendship that matters offers, and what we need to give it to keep the flame alive.

One huge factor, if we don't live near each other, is the ability of both people to communicate in writing. Over the years, we can easily stay in touch with someone that doesn't really matter that much and lose contact with someone special for the simple reason that one likes to correspond and the other doesn't. Most of us have found that telephone conversations leave a lot to be desired. They are often interruptive, lack privacy and tend to be superficial, as in, "What time is it there? How's your weather?" That gets old, fast, and often doesn't satisfy the needs of either person.

Accepting the obvious need to connect in a way that is real, we often feel frustrated about how to create it. Class reunions notwithstanding, we can be on the alert for a chance to hook up and have a good visit at an airport or on a vacation. Both could offer a great chance to connect if we were willing to work through the logistics. As a friendship tool, however, it can only be effective if contact is kept current by some other means like, email.

Sometimes it takes a direct confrontation to clear the air about long silences. Rather than fuss and fume about not hearing from someone special, it may be more productive to ask what, if anything can be done to continue the connection.

Nothing much can be done if there isn't a demonstration of mutual responsibility. There are times when one person takes the initiative all of the time because it matters that much. In such cases the other person may welcome those occasions yet never reciprocate. If that's as good as it's ever going to get, it may still be better than nothing...because nothing brings us obsolete addresses and returned mail.

There are so many ways to be friends that each situation has to be judged on its own merit. Some friendships are purely data oriented and others reach way down into spiritual and philosophical levels that mean a lot to us when shared. Decisions regarding how much to put into staying in touch often depend on those factors.

Instead of letting such matters drift, we can take a close look at our friendships, great and small, to determine if we are getting what we want from them. How can they be improved or, if necessary, purged? Being proactive could bring about some very valuable changes, while facing reality might lighten the load.

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