

Forgive Your Friends (Part 5 of 6)

It is in the realm of friendships that we move beyond the sphere of “given” relationships (such as the family) and seek to establish ourselves and our identities in newer, and perhaps more challenging, ways. Especially in teenage years, our friendships form the center of our emotional lives. Yet even as adults, friendships offer us a way of relating that is unique and much different from relating to spouse, children or other family members. Friends are chosen, and those who last year-in-and-year-out know how important forgiveness is in any relationship. There is no such thing as a relationship free of pain.

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Forgive your friends when they **open up** to you and are **vulnerable** to you, a vulnerability you may not be comfortable with or ready for. Forgive them when they are made **uncomfortable by your openness**. They may not be ready for you! Remember that establishing healthy boundaries can be messy business. Forgive them when they cannot be as vulnerable and open as you would like them to be. You may want to share more with them than they are prepared to share with you.

Forgive friends when they are **mean or rude**. Once a friendship has been established, it is easy to lapse into taking it for granted, and friends often figure: “Oh, he (or she) will understand if I am an hour late and don’t call.” People worry less about how they come across once they feel accepted. The result is that our friends can appear insensitive or ungrateful. There is security in knowing you can get away with that, but on the wrong day, taking such liberties can bring on resentment, even in the best of friendships.

Forgive your friends for **letting you down**. It is easy enough to set up expectations of those we let into our inner circle. Just because we set up the expectations of them doesn’t mean these expectations are realistic, or that our friends agree to them. No one is perfect, and yet we often establish super-human expectations for those we decide to love! Let us take what love

our friends offer us as a gift, an not ask for anything more.

Forgive them for **not being able to answer all of your needs**. We have different friends because we have different needs. No one (not even a spouse) can give us everything we need.

Forgive your friends for **not being able to read your mind**. Many of us mask our feelings more than we think, and then are hurt when nobody notices that we are depressed or disappointed. Unless we specifically communicate it to them, many friends may not know what we need from them.

Forgive your friends for **growing apart from you**. Maintaining a relationship takes a lot of work, and demands commitment over time. Lives change; people change. Real love means being able to let go, in spite of the pain. It doesn’t mean that what was there before wasn’t real. It just means that it is over now. When friends marry or change jobs or move, their lives take on a different focus. Learn to accept that and see how you can fit in, rather than longing for “the good ol’ days.”

Forgive them for their **insincerity and tentativeness**. Forgive them for challenging you. Forgive them if they occasionally become a source of embarrassment for you.

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Friendships are generally less stormy than romantic relationships. They can be anchors of stability while we venture out and explore new ways of relating to people, or during crises with a mate. Friendships form because people match, because friends share something in common. We choose our friends, yet that doesn’t exempt them from causing us hurt and pain, which need to be forgiven.