

Friendship Through The Years

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Members' Packets: Prepare packets with all materials for all participants. You will have (4) 2-sided sheets for each person. The 2-sided activity sheet may be another color and is not stapled to the other 3 as it is handed out separately.

Leader's Packet: The leader's packet should also contain this sheet.

Notes for the Leader:

All lesson materials are provided for both the leader and the group, along with the activities and the references with notes. The lesson discussion guide is on the top 2-sided sheet. The Quotations and the following 2 sheets are resources/enrichment materials. The activity sheet is separate.

1. Preparation - Read the lesson through using a highlighter. The resource/enrichment section has many items you may want to include in the lesson discussion, depending on the time available.
2. Begin lesson with an introductory activity – 2 are provided as possibilities
3. Each of the bold headings is intended as a topic you can frame as a discussion question. The bulleted points below the heading are among items you may bring out during the discussion. Details of the bulleted items are in the resource section.
4. The 2 Activities may be done in groups of 2 for discussion, but each person should prepare her/his own list.
5. Use as many of the enrichment materials as you have time, pointing out particular ones for reading later.

Hopefully, this class will encourage all of us to take time to nourish friendships over time. Building on ideas here, we are able to add richness, strength, stability, and health to our lives. Simultaneously we expand our abilities to endure difficult times while providing support to others - -all while adding to the enjoyment of daily life!

Friendship Through the Years

Suggested Introductory Activities for the Group

- Friendship builders that work for you
- Challenges you have seen in maintaining friendships over time

Guiding the Discussion:

Value of Friendships to Men and Women

- Friendships are vital. They may be said to shape who we are and who we are yet to be, to bring calm and reassurance to tumultuous times in our lives, and help us remember who we really are. (Berkowitz)
- Many scientific studies that “having a close group of friends helps people sleep better, improve their immune systems, stave off dementia, and actually live longer.” (DrDanMontgomery.com)
- Long-lasting friendships tend to involve both parties contributing and receiving benefits, in a fairly balanced way.
- Friendships bring richness to our lives, encourage health personal growth

Friendships Styles Among Men and Among Women

- Women tend to have deep friendships that cover a broad spectrum of life, and talk about them as being self-revealing, accepting and intimate.
- Men tend to have fewer close friendships or “best friends” than women. Friendships among men tend to be varied with the relationships primarily centered around particular activities, such as sports, work sharing, exchanging favors, mentoring. Barriers to more intimate friendships among men include competitiveness, stereotypes about “real men,” and fears of homosexuality.
- (see Research Notes on gender differences in friendship styles and values
- Your ideas. . . .

What do friends talk about?

- Possibilities: what we are doing at the moment; hobbies, What’s going on in our lives (children, marriage, work), what’s happening around us, who’s doing what; how we feel; what we dream; what we’ve learned; what we fear; how we believe.
- Do we mostly engage in “small talk,” or primarily deep conversations?
- Small talk is like brushing wings – deeper conversations confirm who we are, strengthen the basis for enduring relationships. Deep affirmation builds life happiness. According to one study, “the happiest participants had roughly one third as much small talk and twice as many substantive (deep) conversations (Pshcyo. Sci., 2010)
- What do you talk about with your best friends?
- Others:

Discuss what qualities are needed to build a friendship relationship with vitality that will flourish through the years.

Include these in the discussion:

- Develop “choice” friendships. Choose people you wish to have for friends – vs just spending time with people who happen to cross your path. (Cortright)
- Solid basis for enduring friendships involves trust, shared interests and good times/fun
- Importance of laughter, humor, fun.
- (be sure to include the need for commitment to nurturing the relationship.)

Ideas for things to share/send/ do “just for fun” from: girlfriendology.com

- funny videos and quotes, jokes – lots of funny and inspiring videos on the Girlfriendology Facebook page posted each weekday Humor – an online source: <http://www.funny-jokes.net/viewjoke/11026.html>
- funny greeting cards – a good laugh makes you forget stress
- Watch a funny movie (or send one) Suggestions on the site include, “The Holiday,” “My Best Friend’s Wedding,” “Mama Mia,” “My Big Fat Greek Wedding,” “Nutty Professor,” “Valentine’s Day,” “Absolutely Fabulous,” and “Whose Line is it Anyway?” (Not checked for ratings, etc)

- Send a funny book – Suggestions are on the same site.
- See research section for benefits of laughter

Activity: Suggestions on how to be a good friend from 4 online sources are listed on the Activity Sheet “Be a Better Friend Through the Years Ahead.” Pair up and discuss the lists, starting your personal priorities. List your 2 to 5 personal goals for building better long term friendships in the column on the right.

Activity: Check out the Friendship Calendar suggestions printed from [Girlfriendology.com](http://girlfriendology.com). Star some that you might like to do with a special friend and make a list to refer to during the month ahead. Example: Make Sunday, “phone-a-friend” day. Participants who go to the website at the top of the page will find lots of “clickable” ideas for each day.

When Friendships End (summary from thefriendshipblog.com)

- It hurts. Often both feel shame or blame.
- Often affects more than 2.
- There are no formal social rules.
- Try to be graceful and kind (www.thefriendshipblog.com)

Quotes -many from <http://www.girlfriendsocial.com/blog/quotes-and-inspiration/43-awesome-friendship-quotes/>:

- “A friend is: a push when you’ve stopped; A word when you’re lonely; A guide when you’re searching; A smile when you’re sad; A song when you’re glad; A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future & accepts you today, just the way you are.” (from “Friendship is a Blessing,” book)
- A friend is one who walks in when others walk out – Walter Winchill
- A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one’s heart, chaff, and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away. Unknown
- A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you just the way you are. Unknown
- Friends: people who know you well, but like you anyway. Unknown
- Friends are those rare people who ask how we are and then wait to hear the answer. Ed Cunningham
- The proper office of a friend is to side with you when you are wrong. Nearly anybody will side with you when you are right. Mark Twain
- When you’re up, your friends know who you are. When you’re down, you know who your friends are. Unknown.
- Everyone hears what you say. Friends listen to what you say. Best friends listen to what you don’t say. Unknown.
- You can make more friends in two months by becoming genuinely interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you. Dale Carnegie
- The shortest distance between new friends is a smile. Unknown
- If you go looking for a friend, you’re going to find they’re very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you’ll find them everywhere. Zig Ziglar
- Think to Thank. In these three words are the finest capsule course for a happy marriage, formula for enduring friendship, and a pattern for personal happiness. Thomas S. Monson
- Reprove your friend privately, commend him publicly. Solon
- The best mirror is a friend’s eye. Unknown
- Don’t walk in front of me; I may not follow. Don’t walk behind me, I may not lead. Just walk beside me and be my friend. Albert Camus
- To the world you may be just one person, but to one person you may be the world.
- Nobody, but nobody, can make it out here alone. Maya Angelou <http://ow.ly/4jDb7>

Celebrate the Little Things

By Willa Hoey - <http://domania.us/SwordSisters/Inspirations4/Little Things.html>

It's the little things we do and say
That mean so much as we go our way.
A kindly deed can lift a load from weary shoulders on the road;
Or a gentle word, like summer rain,
May soothe some heart and banish pain.
What joy or sadness often springs
From just the simple little things!



Quotes and Resources from the Research for Discussion:

Friendship Styles and Values, Research

- **Gayle Berkowitz 2002:** UCLA Study on Friendship Among Women – an alternative to fight or flight (<http://anapsid.org/cnd/gender/tendfend.html>)
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Be-a-Good-Friend>
- 5 Ways to Be A Better Friend – REALSIMPLE.com – August,2011 by Anne-Marie O’Neill
- How You Can Be a Better Friend – <http://www.momscape.com/articles/betterfriend.htm>
- How to be a Better Best Friend – http://www.ehow.com/how_2309879_be-better-best-friend.html#xzz1VCa1UnXz
- Breaking Up is Hard to do - <http://www.thefriendshipblog.com/>
- Make a friend laugh – <http://girlfriendology.com/blog/3559/month-of-friendship>

Friendships help you live longer – two research studies (summarized by Berkowitz 2002)

- **People who had no friends increased their risk of death over a 6-month period.**
- **In another study, those who had the most friends over a 9-year period cut their risk of death by more than 60%**
- **Ruthellen Josselson, Ph.D.:** co-author of Best Friends: The Pleasures and Perils of Girls' and Women's Friendships (Three Rivers Press, 1998). cited by Berkowitz:
 - Every time we get overly busy with work and family, the first thing we do is let go of friendships with other women, explains Dr. Josselson. We push them right to the back burner.
 - That's really a mistake because women are such a source of strength to each other. We nurture one another.
 - And we need to have unpressured space in which we can do the special kind of talk that women do when they're with other women. It's a very healing experience.

Friends help you live better – (summarized from the Nurses’ Health Study – Harvard by Berkowitz 2002, above)

- The more friends women had, the less likely they were to develop physical impairments as they aged, and the more likely they were to be leading a joyful life.
- Also concluded that not having close friends of confidants is as detrimental to your health as smoking or carrying extra weight.

Celebrate the Little Things

- **Willa Hoey :** <http://domania.us/SwordSisters/Inspirations4/LittleThings.html>
- **Rannveig Traustadottir:** <http://thechp.syr.edu/genpat.htm>

How are gender differences in friendship styles affected by the different ways men and women handle stress?

Gayle Berkowitz quotes summarized at www.anapsid.org/cnd/gender/tendfend.html

- For many years, research has seemed to support the idea that stress/crisis results in an adrenalin rush that results in a “fight or flight” response. However around 2002 a pair of researchers noted that 90% of this research was done on men. Their studies showed that women deal with stress better if they bond with other women, tend to nurturing activities and routines with household and children.
- Stress causes the release of a number of chemicals in the blood stream, including adrenalin and oxytocin.
- The “stand and fight” or “take flight” protective impulse received the most emphasis in 5 decades of research. During that time, 90% of the research was on males. A typical example would find a guy in today’s world, heading for solitude to work out the contradictory crisis messages.
- However, more recent research has shown that although the “fight or flight” responses are typical ways men deal with stress, women basically deal with stress differently. Women under stress deal better with the

situation if they seek out the company of other women, tend to the needs of children, befriend, bond and nurture – It seems that in women under stress, the adrenalin surge is buffered by additional oxytocin which is released in nurturing and has a calming effect. Estrogen enhances the process. You might say the stress drives women to friendship.

- In men, however, the calming effect of oxytocin is reduced by additional testosterone men produce under stress.

How friendships among men and among women differ

Rannveig Traustadottir: <http://thechp.syr.edu/genpat.htm>:

- . . . women usually make a deep commitment to their female friends and their friendships usually cover a broad spectrum, while men's friendships tend to be segmented and centered around particular activities (Gouldner & Strong, 1987; Lenz & Myerhoff, 1985; McGill, 1985; Pogrebin, 1987).
- Men's friendships have typically been described in terms of bravery and physical sacrifice in providing assistance to others. , researchers have found that men have significantly fewer friends than women, especially close friendships or best friends (Bell, 1981; Block, 1980; Fasteau, 1991; Smith, 1983).
- Although the majority of men may not have close friends they do not conduct their lives in isolation. Block (1980) found that most of the men in his study had a variety of same-sex relationships.
- These include what Block calls "activity friends," such as a weekly tennis partner or drinking buddies; "convenience friends" where the relationship is based on the exchange of favors; and "mentor friends" typically between a younger and an older man.
- While women's friendships are usually defined as self-revealing, accepting, and intimate, men usually shy away from intimacy and closeness. Authors identify at least three barriers to close friendships among men: competition between men, traditional masculine stereotypes about "real men," and fear of homosexuality (Fasteau, 1991; McGill, 1985; Miller, 1983).
- In a discussion of gender differences in friendship, Sherrod (1989), points out that although men rate their friendship as less intimate than do women, at least in terms of self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness, men's friendships nevertheless serve to buffer stress and reduce depression in the same way that women's friendships do. Sherrod also reports that when men do achieve a high level of intimacy with other men, they usually follow a different path than women, one that emphasizes activities and companionship over self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness. (Rannveig cites at site above)

Contribution of conversation in long-term friendship:

From: Psychological Science, "Eavesdropping on Happiness," 2/18/2010,

- "the happiest participants in the study had roughly one third as much small talk and twice as many substantive [deep] conversations."

From "Laughter is the best Medicine: the Health Benefits of Laughter" :

http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health.htm

- Laughter relaxes the whole body. – leaves muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.
- Laughter boosts the immune system, decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies.
- Laughter triggers the release of endorphins – the body's feel-good chemical (promote well-being, temporarily relieve pain.
- Laughter protects the heart – improves function of blood vessels in blood flow, which can protect from heart problems

Susie Michelle Cortright, momscape.com – How You Can be a Better Friend ?

Friendship Quotes and Inspiration

<http://www.girlfriendsocial.com/blog/quotes-and-inspiration/43-awesome-friendship-quotes/>

Men and Friendships

[Thabiti Anyabwile](http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0001486.cfm) - Men and Friendship from <http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0001486.cfm>

Below are some quotes from the ezine "boundless.org". Serious reflections on friendship by men are not plentiful on the net. This resource would also be helpful in some settings in preparing for a men's retreat or inspirational group such as Sunday Schools:

- I treasure my friends. But probably not as deeply as I should.
- . . .of the hundreds of men I've watched a ball game with, of the hundreds of others I've played pick-up basketball with, few if any of them would make my list of deep friendships. Certainly these kinds of outlets give us wide associations, but they don't tend to cultivate the kind of depth and loyalty needed for bearing the weight of true friendship.
- The difference between the men I've played basketball with and the men I count as friends comes down to how much we share of ourselves. Friends share the meaningful. They take the courageous risk of becoming transparent, sharing burdens, hopes, joys, fears, failures, triumphs, questions, and resolutions
- Most men don't cultivate deep friendships because such sharing makes them vulnerable. The irony, of course, is that they long for deep friendships but have chosen the path that prevents them.



Activity: Be a Better Friend Through the Years Ahead

Be A Good Friend Wikihow.com	How You Can Be a Better Friend Momscape.com By Susie Michelle Cortright	5 Ways to Be a Better Friend 8/11 REALSIMPLE.com by Anne-Marie O'Neill	How To Be a Better Best Friend Ehow.com/how 2309879 be-better-best-friend.html	My Goals For Being a Better Friend
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be real – be yourself • Be honest – keep your promises • Be loyal • Be respectful –listen and disagree respectfully • Watch out for your friend – gossip, drugs, alcohol, suicide issues- get help if needed • Pitch in for friends during times of crisis – be there to listen, talk or be together. . • Give thoughtful advice when asked but don't insist your friend follows it • Give your friend space • Listen – you don't have to agree • Share – be selfless and accommodating, but there needs to be balance. Reciprocate in kind when you've been the recipient – no grabbing, stealing, envying , bragging. • Don't: be selfish; wear out welcome, abuse generosity, return borrowed items in good shape; don't compare labels, prices size and value • Live by the Golden Rule • Seek to deepen your friendship over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like Yourself • Choose close relationships wisely • Make the time • Make the first move - follow up with your friends • The Golden Rule • “To have a friend, be a friend.” Be interested, enthusiastic, energetic, avoid complaining, gossiping, criticizing • Sweat the small stuff- remember kindnesses, events, notice changes • Listen – slow down –don't finish your friend's sentences- eye contact, ask questions; be careful with advice • Be loyal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop Giving Advice • Show a different side of yourself • Be genuinely happy for a friend's success • Make small gestures • Work harder on seeing your friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your best friend what a great best friend she is • Spend time with your best friend • Reassure your best friend that you-re there for her if she ever needs help • Don't meddle in your best friend's life • Accept your best friend as she is 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

Activity: Ideas for a Month of Friendship.

How many ways can you be a better friend?

From: <http://girlfriendology.com/blog/3876/february-international-friendship-month-30-ways-to-be-a-better-friend/>

- [Day 1: Throw a girlfriend dinner party](#)
- [Day 2: Girlfriend Gratitude](#)
- [Day 3: Social Media Friends](#)
- [Day 4: Make a memory gift for your girlfriend](#)
- [Day 5: Phone a Friend!](#)
- [Day 6: Plan a Girlfriend Trip](#)
- [Day 7: Pamper your Pals](#)
- [Day 8: Make a Friend Laugh](#)
- [Day 9: Start a Girlfriend Tradition](#)
- [Day 10: Go Shopping with your Girlfriends](#)
- [Day 11: Remember a friend you've lost, in honor of 9/11](#)
- [Day 12: Make dinner for your girlfriend](#)
- [Day 13: Send your girlfriend a card](#)
- [Day 14: Host a Girlfriend Happy Hour, GNO](#)
- [Day 15: Practice Random Acts of Kindness](#)
- [Day 16: Get a Mani/Pedi Together](#)
- [Day 17: Organize your closet with Girlfriend](#)
- [Day 18: Have a girlfriend movie or wii party](#)
- [Day 19: Go for a girlfriend walk together](#)
- [Day 20: Throw a all-about-you-girlfriend party](#)
- [Day 21: Make a girlfriend gift](#)
- [Day 22: Coffee with a girlfriend](#)
- [Day 23: Go explore with your girlfriend](#)
- [Day 24: Surprise your BFF](#)
- [Day 25: Take a class with your girlfriend\(s\)](#)
- [Day 26: Tell her how much her friendship means to you](#)
- [Day 27: Anticipate her needs](#)
- [Day 28: Ask a girlfriend for a favor](#)
- [Day 29: Thoughtful girlfriend gifts](#)
- [Day 30: Spend time with a friend](#)

My 10 Favorite Friendship Builders to Try:



1		Name that friend!
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
10		

Note: At the site, if you click on the day, lots of great ideas come up!