

Foundations

A Newsletter for Married Couples

Winter

Being a Friend

How do you build and maintain the friendship with your spouse? Sounds like it should be a fairly easy task, but for many it's not. There are two main reasons: the first is that the couple didn't start out as friends. Arranged marriages don't usually have spouses that started out as friends. Some couples marry quickly after meeting so they have not had time to build a friendship. Then there are those who put other criteria first. Whether it's looks, intelligence, success potential, those couples may not have come into marriage as friends.

"The strongest marriages are based on strong friendships," says Dr. John Gottman, who has been researching relationships for over 25 years. So have these couples lost their chance for a strong marriage? Not at all. The door is still open for them to build a friendship to support their marriage.

Getting to Know You

How well do you know your spouse? Do you know their favorite kind of food? Their favorite genre of movie? Their best childhood friend? If you haven't

Continues on page 2



Friendship

A Friend in Need

I have often wondered about the expression "A friend in need is a friend in deed." The intended meaning of course, is that a true friend will show their friendship by showing up when you really need help. They are friends not just in word, but in deeds.

Friend – really?

All of us have had the experience of being let down by someone who promised to be there for us and then never showed up. We questioned whether or not they were the friend they claimed to be. We may even have been the friend that didn't show. We forgot or we found it inconvenient and made up an excuse.



A Needy Friend??

When I first heard the expression, I thought it was "A friend in need is a friend indeed." But why would a needy friend be a friend indeed? Needy friends should be avoided. Shouldn't they?

What a lot of us wish for is a rich friend. We want someone who will be there for us when we need their help. Someone with enough resources (money, tools, information, time) to enable them assist us when we are in need.

No Thought of Repayment

On the other hand, when we befriend another person who needs us and cannot

Continues on page 4

Being a Friend (continued from page 1)



known each other long, then you could have some trivia questions you each try to answer when you are together. The better you know your spouse the easier it will be to cultivate a friendship. My spouse likes football – I don't. I love reading mystery stories. He doesn't. SO we won't try to forge a friendship around either of those things, but knowing them allows me to buy a hat for him with his favorite team logo, while he might pick up a new mystery for me!

Getting to Like You

It may seem self-evident that you should like your partner, right? But sometimes we just focus on the wrong things! You know there are times when you are upset with a behavior and it colors everything. But one behavior is not the totality of any person. When you can step back and see it as part of a whole picture of your spouse you may have a better perspective. Are you tired, or hungry, or sad? Maybe that's why you got upset. If you can

bring to mind the affection you usually feel for this person it might help. Now this is the “put the red tablecloth in with the white towels” kind of blunder. But even for bigger issues, being able to access the feelings of warmth for your partner can help heal a breach much quicker.

Getting to Trust You

As you learn more about your partner and develop an attitude of affection, you should be able to come to trust them. That trust should extend beyond the major issues – they won't cheat on you or abscond with all your money – but to more mundane, everyday things. They will speak up in your defense. They will pick the kids up if they said they would. They will have your back in the chores of everyday life as well as the curve balls life throws at you.

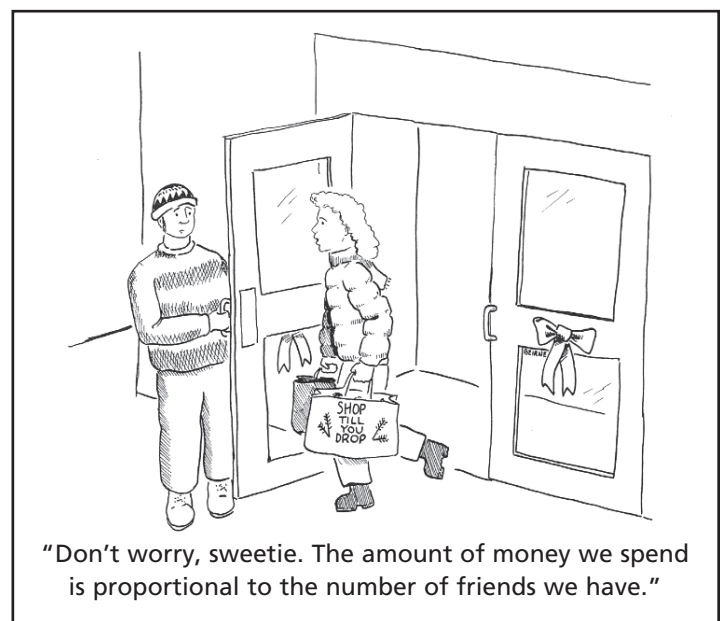
And the road goes on...

Songwriter Dave Mallett has a song entitled “And the Road goes on forever.” It addresses the nature of friendship, but in addition it talks about the reality of a life that keeps unfolding in front of us. That is the nature of friendship in marriage too. As we work on it, it continues to unfold. ■

FOUNDATIONS SUBSCRIBERS

TIME TO RENEW

Call us at 207-775-4757 to receive another great year of Foundations, or email us at foundationseditor@gmail.com



Exercise

I know/understand:

My friends are an important part of my life.

Agree Disagree Unsure

My friends influence my values and choices.

My spouse is my best friend.

We have friends who are friends to our marriage

I believe:

It's important to support my spouse in their desire to have friends.

Agree Disagree Unsure

Friendship is an important part of a good marital relationship.

My friendships have changed over the years.

Friendship requires time and effort.

I will:

Avoid making fun of or criticizing my spouse's friends.

Agree Disagree Unsure

Try to balance friend time and spouse time (including internet contacts)

Develop a common hobby or volunteer opportunity, if we don't already have one, with my spouse



Kids' View

Remember the place in the Bible where Jesus says, "Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven"? Well, the following items came from a children's website talking about friends. Their comments show both wisdom and the enduring demands of friendship.

Treat your friends the way you want to be treated.

This echoes another adage from Scripture, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This is especially true of the friend you live with, your spouse.

Keep secrets that are told to you.

Keeping the details of your marriage within your marriage is a great way to be a good friend. Your misunderstandings should be between the two of you unless it's okay with your spouse to talk to someone else about them.

Pay attention when your friend is talking.

Once again, there is a lot of wisdom in that piece of advice. Think how many difficulties could be avoided if friends really listened to one another.

Keep your promises.

Within a marriage, maybe the most essential piece of friendship advice is to keep your promises, the first and



foremost, the vow of faithfulness you made at your wedding.

Share things with your friend.

Yup!

Tell your friend the truth.

Always, unless it is something that will hurt them. Do they need to know someone called them lazy?

Stick up for your friend.

Loyalty is a keystone of friendship.

Take turns.

Whether it's where to go to dinner, what kind of movie to see, or what TV show to watch, taking turns is as important in marriage as it is in childhood.

When you guide your friendship by these principles, whether you are eight or forty-eight, you show respect for the other person. Hopefully these examples will indicate how the ideas these children expressed about friendship can be taken on an adult level as a guide to mature relationships. Whether you are considering the best way to treat your spouse, your co-workers, your relatives or your God, there are items for reflection on this list that probably apply. In this time of year, when the stresses of the holiday sometimes make us feel overwhelmed, this short list of friendship tips from kids may help you have a kinder, gentler season. ■

A Friend in Need (continued from page 1)

possibly repay us for our help we learn the meaning of true friendship. True friendship is being available without the thought of repayment. It is helping without an ulterior motive, and in the helping we are enriched. Not by the person we assisted, but by the experience itself.

Responding Out of Love

When my best friend and spouse needs

my help he or she is a friend because they call from me the best part of myself. They ask and I respond out of love, not because I owe them but because I love them. Each time I am asked and I respond I am a better person – less selfish, less concerned with repayment and better able to give the next time.

Haven't they paid me a great

compliment by implying that I am one of the "rich" ones who has the resources to support them?

What Better Friend

My friend has asked and I have responded and we are both the better. What better friend could I have than one who calls me out of myself and calls me to grow? That person *is* a friend indeed! ■

Going out with your friends – again?

Some people live in the same community their whole lives. Imagine the number of friends you can accumulate over that time. You have neighborhood friends, school friends, friends that played on a sports team with you, friends from church. Coming into marriage with all these people who are competing for your spare time, when your spouse is also looking to spend time with you, can be stressful. On the other hand, coming from the same community may give you a common set of expectations about what your friendships should look like after marriage.

Then there are the rest of us, who moved away from our home town. We may have needed to build a community around us, and want to keep in touch with those folks after we're married. That is very appropriate, but again calls for an adjustment of the part of our spouse. What if they don't have that need? What if they are perfectly happy to have their socializing time with you?

Here are some suggestions for having that conversation.

1. Find a good time to talk. Like any issue in marriage, don't try to sort things out in the middle of a tense situation. If your spouse says "Going out with your friends – again?" it's not the time to try to figure it out. It's time to apologize that you hadn't let them know that this was scheduled, and to assure them that you really want to talk about it.
2. Explain what having time with your friends means to you. (That might mean figuring it out for yourself first). Whether it's a sense of independence, a chance to talk about things that don't interest her or him, a chance to catch up with the lives of others you care about, it is easier to understand if they know the reason behind your need to be with friends.
3. Then the two of you should set some expectations. You will let your spouse know in advance that you're planning a friend's night. It will not be more often than X times a



month. You will also schedule a friend night with your spouse doing something you both like to do.

People differ in the amount of time they need to spend with friends. In an [article](#) on male friendships, one man said, "I don't need a guy's night out. I have two brothers that I hang out with occasionally. I never had a lot of friends in school so I never was the hang with the guy's type." Another told how his war buddy was the only one he could talk to about what they both went through.

There are good reasons for having and keeping friends, but in doing so you do not want to lose track of your primary relationship. If your friends complain that they don't see enough of you, it's a sign that they value you and let them know you still enjoy your time with them, you just have less to go around now. And remind them it's much more fun to be with them when they are not complaining! ■

A Time to Talk

by Robert Frost

When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,

And shout from where I am, What is it?
No, not as there is a time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.

Spirituality

No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. John 15:15

If we ever had a question about what Jesus had in mind for his relationship with us, this one quote should help us understand his intentions. He meant for us to be friends. And because we are friends, he lets us know that we are on the inside track. He plans to give us all the information that comes from his Father.

Open Doors

So the nature of friendship being a relationship where the doors are open between two people comes directly from scripture. Observing the way people behave, we may see some choosing friends for some advantage to them. Politically, it would be good to be friends with him. Socially, I will be in the right circles if I'm friends with them.

What Motivates the friendship

But Jesus seems to indicate that friendships based on ulterior motives are not true friendships at all. If we are guarded in the things we share, or picking only the most flattering view of ourselves to reveal to the other, then we need to examine the friendship for its genuineness.

Think about how relaxed you are with some people, how easy it is to share, to laugh, to reveal your concerns and doubts. That is part and parcel of friendship in the way Jesus seemed to be describing it.

Sharing with Your Spouse

That is the essence of the friendship called marriage. You should be able to share openly your sadness, fears, doubts, as well as your joys, successes, and insights.

If you find yourself not wanting to hear your partner's negative feelings, think about how Jesus wanted to share ALL his Father had shared with him, which included the pretty bad news that he was going to be killed.

Ears Fully Open

Do you feel that your partner has a tough time listening to you share from a painful place? A reminder from you of how much it means to you to be able to open up may be all they need to turn toward you in true listening mode, fully lover, fully friend.

We live in a fix it and move on world. Creating a safe harbor in your home for the two of you will deepen your friendship and your spirituality as well.



COUPLES ARE BUILDING STRONGER MARRIAGES BY ATTENDING

**John Gottman's
7 Principles for
Making Marriage
Work**

STEVE AND KATHY BEIRNE
ARE TRAINED PRESENTERS
FOR THIS POWERFUL
WORKSHOP.
CONTACT US FOR
AVAILABILITY

email:sandkpubs@gmail.com

Foundations *A Newsletter for Married Couples*

A publication of S&K Publishers in partnership with the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers.

Contact us at PO Box 1632, Portland, ME 04104-1632, or by email at:

foundationseditor@gmail.com

Copyright 2019 by Foundations. All rights reserved. Written permission must be obtained from *Foundations* for reprinting and duplicating.

