

Ways to Nourish Friendship*

Permit your friends to be themselves. Accept them as they are. Be grateful for what is there, not annoyed by what friends can't give. Accept each one's imperfections—and individuality—and don't feel threatened if their opinions and tastes sometimes differ from yours.

Give each other space. We are entitled to our private feelings and thoughts. Friends who try to invade the inner space of one another risk destroying the relationship.

Be ready to give and to receive. Be eager to help and able to ask for help as well. But don't be over-demanding or let yourself be used.

Make your advice constructive. When a friend needs to talk, listen without interruption. If advice is asked for, be positive and supportive.

Be loyal. Loyalty is faithfulness. It means "being with" your friend in bad times as well as good. It means honoring confidence. It means neither disparaging a friend in his absence nor allowing others to do so.

Give praise and encouragement. Tell your friends what you like about them, how thankful you are for their presence in your life. Delight in their talents, applaud their successes.

Be honest. Open communication is of the essence of friendship. Express your feelings, good and bad, instead of bottling up your anger or anxiety. Clearing the air helps a relationship grow. But be aware of what is better left unsaid.

Treat friends as equals. In true friendship there is no Number One, no room for showing off how smart and successful you are, for envy, for feeling superior or inferior.

Trust your friends. We live in a messy, imperfect world made up of imperfect people. Trust can be betrayed but it is essential to friendship. Make the effort to believe in the intrinsic goodness of your friends.

Be willing to risk. One of the obstacles to a close relationship is the fear of rejection and hurt. We don't want to reveal our vulnerability. *But unless we dare to love others, we condemn ourselves to a sterile life.*