

Friendship Starters

WANT TO MAKE new friends, but don't know where to begin? Here are several ideas for getting started:

- **Be friendly.** Say hello. Smile. Show interest in what this person is doing. Basically, treat him or her as you'd like to be treated.
 - **Take the time.** Avoid asking questions that you don't have the time or willingness to hear the answers to. Don't rush the conversation, either. If you're in a hurry and seem abrupt, people may get the wrong impression.
 - **Remember names.** When you initially meet someone, make the effort to remember his name. If he doesn't have to repeat it, he'll know you were listening closely.
 - **Listen.** Make eye contact when someone is talking to you. Ask questions and wait patiently for a response.
 - **Pay attention.** When listening, keep in mind key things this person tells you about himself. When your paths cross again, you can refer back to that earlier conversation. The person will then realize that not only were you listening, but you cared enough to remember what he said.
 - **Say a good word.** People like to be (*sincerely*) complimented. Find something good to say about your new friend—and say it.
 - **Keep confidences.** As a friendship develops, it may be tempting to tell others something your new friend said in secret. *That's gossip.* Don't do it.
 - **Laugh.** A good sense of humor goes a long way in building a solid friendship.
 - **Respect a person's space.** Everybody needs time for themselves and other friends. If you're always waiting at her locker, or always shoving your way behind him in the lunch line, you'll quickly wear out your welcome.
 - **Open up slowly.** Initially, stick with talking about everyday stuff (the weather, homework, the cafeteria's mystery meat). Deeper conversations will come naturally as a closer friendship develops.
- Kris Bearss and
Chris Lutes

Friendship is a gift that is appreciated.

No, appreciated is too weak a word. Most often the gift of friendship is *valued*. Treasured. Maybe you've expressed friendship to someone who was not expecting it and you have been surprised, even embarrassed, at the appreciative response.

Friendship is a gift that is given back to us in return. Smile, a smile is given to you. The same with conversation. Or concern. It happens in gift-giving all the time. I give to you; you give to me.



Friendship is a gift that occasionally is rejected. Unappreciated. Unwanted. Our warmth is met with coldness. And we wonder: Is friendship-giving worth the risk? We pull back to protect sensitive feelings. We become cautious, wary of risking friendship again. But rejection is the exception. Most often the gift of friendship is deeply appreciated.

Friendship is a gift that sometimes leads to more than we bargained for. Occasionally, when we give friendship, it is taken and more is expected of us. More than we feel prepared to give. We wonder how to respond when a friend's demands begin to choke us. Crowd us. Drain us.

Sometimes people become possessive of

a friend. In the hunger for friendship, in the drive to fill up the loneliness, people occasionally become jealous of any time we spend on others. Or on ourselves. They cling to us and do not understand why we do not cling back.

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by the needs of a friend, or potential friend. Perhaps we are his only friend, and feel the pressure to give all the friendship he needs—friendship that ought to be divided between several people. We quickly see that this one person and his needs could consume all of our time.

Sometimes we find ourselves in friendship with someone whose values and beliefs are quite different from our own. We feel pressure to wade into waters that we know are polluted. Friendships can have those awkward moments—times when we must decide between compromising what we believe or offending a friend.

The Power of Positive Talk

IF YOU'RE SERIOUS about using your mouth to build up instead of to tear down, here are some suggestions.

- **Try positive name-calling.**

We're naturally good at finding the chink in people's armor. But you can do something different: Look for things to praise instead. If you're the kind of person who honestly notices the good in others and tells them what you see, you'll never be forgotten. Here's a list to get you started: thoughtful, good sense of humor, fun, helpful, great listener, smart, nice-looking, cheerful.

- **Say thank you.** When was the last time you thanked a friend for being there? For showing up on time? For helping you with your homework? Show you care by saying it. Your friends will appreciate it, and your friendships will be strengthened by it.

- **Defend the attacked.**

What's the opposite of a shark? A football player—a blocker to be exact. While the ball carrier runs down the field, several guys are blocking for him, saying to potential tacklers, "You've got to get me first if you want him." In our relationships, we were meant to be each other's blockers—people who are strong enough to say, "You'll have to get past me before you can attack the reputation of someone I know."

For example, when a shark closes in and tells one of your friends, "Way to go, losing that game for us," you can step up to him and say, "What's your problem? He played as hard as he could tonight." Or you hear someone spreading a rumor about a person you know. Instead of sharing the gossip, you confront the individual: "That's not the way it happened. I know for a fact she didn't do that."

Your words have tremendous power—power to build your friends up or to tear them down. So use words wisely.

—Diane Eble and
Ron Hutchcraft

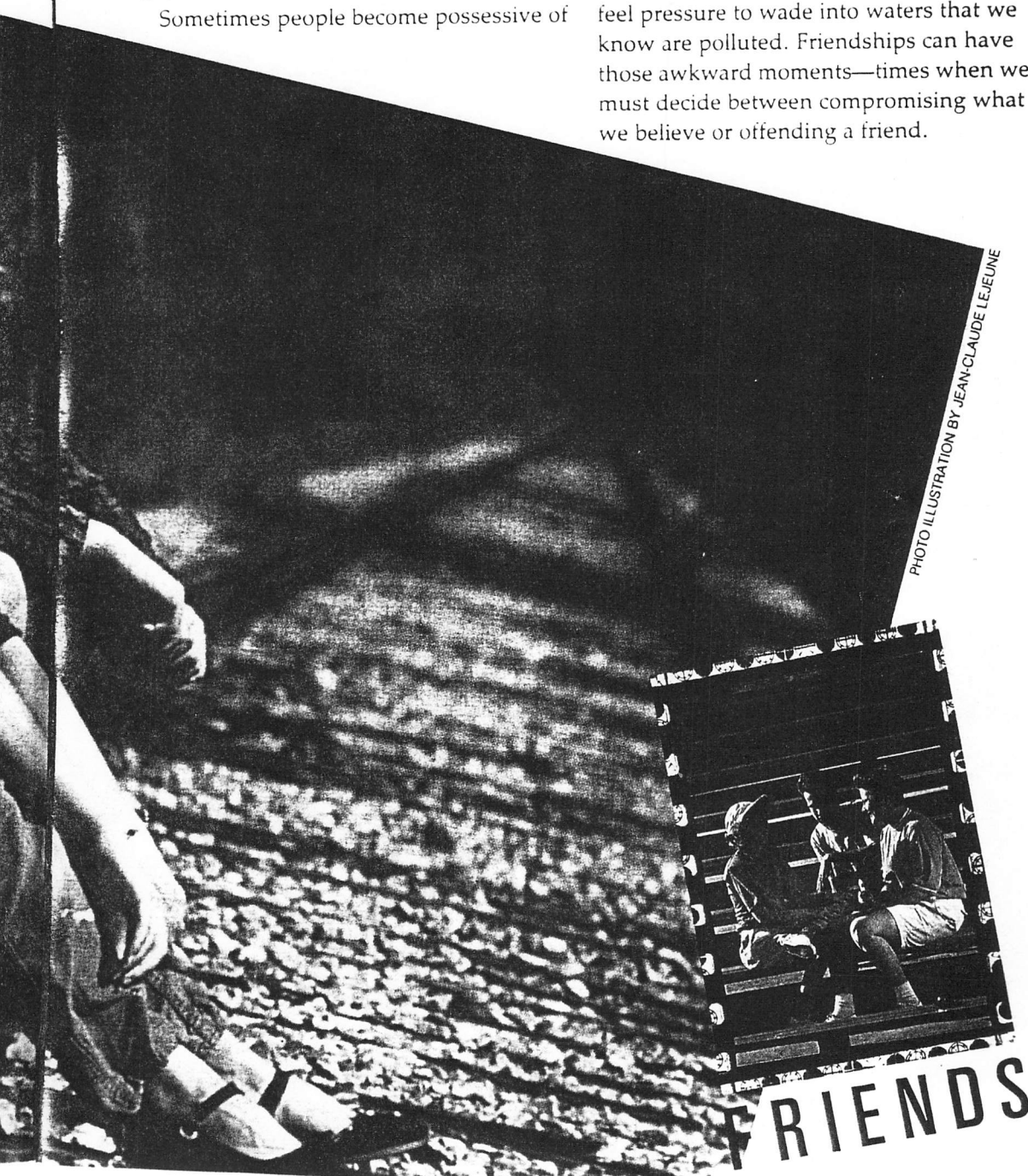


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FRIENDS