

hearsight journal

Fostering Friendship



Let us be grateful to
the people who make
us happy; they are the
charming gardeners
who make our souls
blossom.

- MARCEL PROUST

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FROM THE COMMUNITY

How did you make friends over the pandemic?

The pandemic impacted our lives in many ways. One way is how it affected our ability to socialize and make new friends. We asked our community to share their stories and experiences in making new friends over the pandemic.

JOINING A BOOK CLUB

I joined a virtual book club over the pandemic. I'm an avid reader and it was great being able to meet other readers and share our love of literature.

- Jenna

LEARNING A LANGUAGE

I wanted to work on my Spanish, so started to get tutored virtually every week. To help practice my Spanish, I joined some language groups and, eventually, we got to know each other better and become friends

- Noah

VIRTUAL GAME NIGHT

Since I couldn't see any of my friends in person, we started having virtual game night on Zoom. Friends or friends started joining our game night and, after some time, we became friends.

- Michelle

WRITING TOGETHER

I always loved creative writing, but I always wrote solo. The pandemic gave me the opportunity to join a creative writing group. It was really amazing to hear other people's stories and learn from other writers. After the bans were lifted, we started writing and hanging out in coffee shops together.

- Lee

ATTENDING EVENTS

Meeting new people was really difficult over the pandemic. I had recently moved to the city and didn't know too many people. I just went to as many virtual events as I could and met some really cool people that I stayed connected with.

- Kristie

Being a better friend

Becoming a better friend is not just a positive impact on those around you, but can be beneficial to your own well-being and personal growth. Here are some key qualities that can help you become a better friend.

1 Give encouragement

Encourage your friends to pursue their dreams and goals, and celebrate their successes with them. Offer constructive criticism and help them learn from their mistakes. Sometimes, our friends just need an extra positivity boost.

2 Be honest

Honesty is a key component of any good friendship. Be truthful with your friends, even if it's difficult or uncomfortable. It's important to build trust and establish open communication in your friendship.

3 Listen well

You should always practice good communication with your friends. That means, being honest, open, and respectful in your communication. More so, it is important to be an active listener and making sure your friends are heard and understood.

4 Be supportive

By being a positive and encouraging influence in your friend's life, you can help them navigate challenging times and build a stronger relationship and bond.

5 Be dependable

Be there for your friends when they need you, whether it's to help them move, listen to them when they're going through a tough time, or simply be a shoulder to cry on. Make sure that you keep your promises and follow through on your commitments.

6 Empathize more

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Practice empathy by putting yourself in your friend's shoes, listening actively, and offering support and encouragement.

7 Have fun

One of the best things about friendship is the ability to have fun together. Make an effort to plan fun activities, try new things together, and enjoy each other's company.

8 Show appreciation

Let your friend know that you appreciate them and their friendship. Offer compliments, express gratitude, and show them that you value their presence in your life.

Bridging the Gap

CULTIVATING LONG-DISTANCE FRIENDSHIPS

Maintaining a long-distance friendship can be challenging. It can also be difficult to maintain the same level of closeness and shared experiences as before. Here's a few fun and creative ways you can maintain strong and meaningful relationships.

Sisterhood of the Traveling Scrapbook

Not everyone can fit into the same pair of pants, but everyone can scrapbook! Writing stories, drawing illustrations, and sharing photos and memorabilia, such as ticket stubs, is a great way to share memorable experiences together.

Exchange Packages

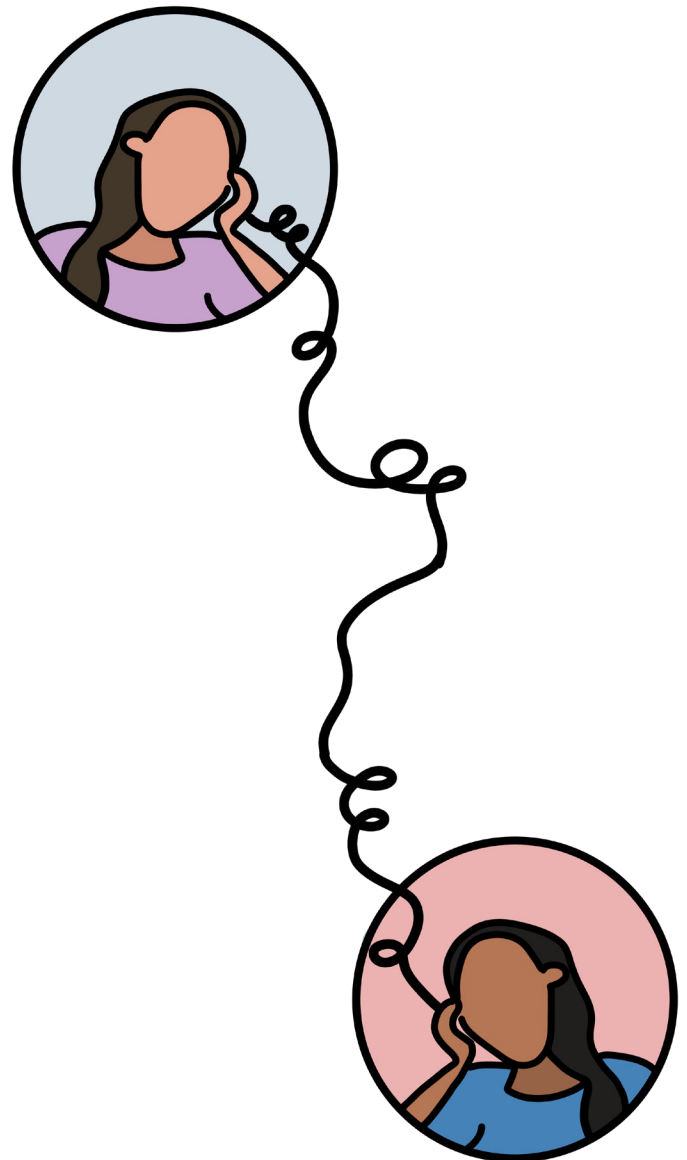
Show your appreciation and care for your friends by exchanging mailer packages. Create anticipation and excitement by creating fun and personalized packages that's a perfect fit for your friend. We have a few care package ideas [here!](#)

Have a Virtual Craft Night

Nothing says fun and creative life some arts and crafts. Have quality time and build a stronger bond with your long-distance friends by expressing yourself creatively. Choose your project, gather materials, plug in, and start crafting!

Send Mixed Tapes (...or Spotify playlists)

This might be a bit of a throwback, but there is something so personal about creating a really good playlist for a friend. I'm a firm believer that music forms an experience and what better than to share that experience with a friend! Create a nostalgic playlist over a specific time in your friendship or create the opportunity to discover something new.



Say “I care” with a care package

Who said gifts are just for birthdays and holidays? Sending care packages to your friends can be a great way to show that you care about them and appreciate their friendship. We've curated a few ideas to brighten your friend's day.





Productive

For the freelancer or full-time work from home friend, this care package helps with productivity with style. Refresh their desk with a planning notebook set, Micron pen set, and a home office candle that will help them stay focused and get things done.

- + [DesignWorks Ink | Textured Soft Touch 2-Pack Notebook Set](#)
- + [Homesick | Home Office 7.5oz Candle](#)
- + [Sakura Pigma | Micron Ink Pen Set](#)

Zen

Everyone needs a little rest and relaxation. Take an aromatherapy shower to relax, lather up with a lavender-infused hand cream, and finish off an herbal tea to relieve stress and stay zen.

- + [The Republic of Tea | Get Relaxed](#)
- + [Latika | Calm Shower Steamers](#)
- + [Mario Badescu | Lavender Hand Cream](#)





Reflect

For the friend that needs to clear their mind and center themselves, this care package includes items that set up the perfect mood. Light a candle and follow prompts with a guided journal to help reflect on the good things in life.

- + [Green Inspired | Simply Grateful Journal](#)
- + [Kate Spade | Colorful Mechanical Pencils](#)
- + [Paddywax | Spark Collection in Vetiver Cardamom](#)

Creative

Cozy in a box. Enjoy everything you need for the perfect snowy night in. Spearmint & Eucalyptus come together for a wonderfully minty bath, alongside an orange peel + clove scented candle for the perfect ambiance. Sip on some organic chai tea in our ceramic speckled mug, and then slip into some cozy cloud socks to complete the evening.

- + [Flow | Creativity Takes Courage](#)
- + [Tombow | Dual Brush Pen Art Marker](#)
- + [Winsor & Newton | Cotman Watercolour Sketchers' Pocket Set](#)



The Power of Communication

Exploring the Importance of Boundaries and Open Dialogue

WITH HUI TING KOK
PRIVATE PRACTICE PSYCHOTHERAPIST



Hui Ting, a Mental Health Counselor and owner of [Hui Ting Kok Psychotherapy](#), is an expert in anxiety, life transitions, and relationships. While based in New York, her in-person and virtual practice helps people uncover the root of the issue, gain clarity, and move forward with a new sense of peace and happiness. We sat down with Hui Ting to discuss the challenges of friendships and how to have healthy relationships through solid and effective communication.

What are some of the psychological benefits of having friends and close friendships?

There are many benefits to having friends! A lot of people stress out over certain things in their lives and having friends can be great in terms of getting the support you need. Even if you don't talk about the things that are bothering you, just being able to hang out with them and have a great time can help relieve some of the stress creating more happy memories. We are social beings and we can't live in this world just

by ourselves. Friends and relationships play so many different roles. They can energize us in many different ways. We can also learn from each other. For example, you can learn how to deal with challenges in life by having a friend who's very assertive and has good communication. Another great benefit is the positive influence that your friends can bring.

Can you tell me about the common challenges that people face with friendships?

Yea, we can start with boundaries. There are three different types of boundaries - cognitive, emotional, and physical boundaries. For instance, if a friend becomes overly dependent on you, it can lead to you taking on a caretaker role that you didn't sign up for. This lack of emotional boundaries can negatively impact the relationship. Another type of boundary is cognitive, which involves holding different beliefs or perspectives. It can be frustrating when you try to change your friend's opinion or habit but they're not receptive. It's important to respect your friend's thoughts and feelings and not anticipate what they need. Instead, you can ask them what they need or want from you.

How can people overcome these challenges?

To overcome these challenges, it's important to set clear boundaries and communicate with your friend. For emotional boundaries, you can communicate your needs and set limits on the emotional support you can provide. For cognitive boundaries, you can respect your friend's opinions and beliefs and ask them what they need or want from you. It's also important to recognize and embrace your limitations and feelings. By communicating openly and honestly with your friend, you can strengthen your friendship and overcome challenges together.

So, it sounds like communication and setting boundaries can be a big challenge in some friendships. Are there other challenges that you've seen come about?

One common challenge or recurring theme I often observe is when friends start to grow in different directions. People often struggle with the notion that if friends were once close, they should remain close indefinitely. However, it is important for individuals to show compassion towards themselves and understand that friendships can evolve in various ways.

Sometimes, this evolution may involve acknowledging that a friend may no longer be the same kind of friend or may not fulfill the same role they once did. It is crucial to recognize your own needs in your current situation and assess whether this friend can still meet those needs. If not, it is perfectly acceptable for that friend to no longer serve that role.

What frequently happens is that there is a strong expectation that a close or best friend should fulfill all expectations and play every role we require. However, in reality, within all our relationships, there are numerous individuals who can play different roles, and it is unfair to expect one person to fulfill all of them.

I wanted to talk a bit about the role that childhood experience might play in friendships. How do our childhood experiences and, perhaps, attachment styles play a role or impact our ability to make friendships or our ability to maintain them?

One thing that immediately comes to mind is the tendency to please people. This inclination can be traced back to past experiences, such as during elementary school, where fitting into certain groups was crucial to avoid bullying or exclusion. I have observed that individuals who have faced such experiences, where they felt excluded and lacked a sense of belonging, tend to struggle with setting boundaries and feel a strong need to please others, even at the expense of their own happiness.

These types of experiences, such as being excluded, bullied, or feeling like an outsider, significantly influence how individuals react and interact with others. Even in adulthood, some individuals continue to feel the pressure to pretend to be someone they are not, simply to fit in. However, in this process, their their actions become incongruent with their true selves, their values, and their own needs. Consequently, many end up surrounded by a group of friends who do not share their interests or values, resulting in unfulfilling friendships driven by the fear of being left out or being without a group altogether.

It seems like you need to have strong self-awareness to realize that you're in these situations and then find ways of dealing with them. What are some ways we can foster that kind of self-realization and help with dealing with the issues that might arise?

Developing the ability to recognize and address underlying issues starts with paying attention to what upsets and frustrates you. When you experience feelings of annoyance or anger, take a moment to sit with those emotions and inquire, "Why am I feeling this way? What is causing this frustration?" These emotions often indicate that either someone has violated your boundaries or you are acting in a way that conflicts with your own values. By focusing on these emotions and giving them your attention, you can begin to uncover the root causes of your feelings.

Journaling or discussing your thoughts with someone you trust, like a therapist, can be immensely beneficial in exploring these dynamics and their origins. Through this process, you can gain insights and clarity about your emotions and behaviors.

Once you have analyzed your feelings, it's essential to reframe the belief that rejection is inherently negative. Instead, embrace the perspective that rejection can be a positive occurrence, indicating that a particular friendship may not be suitable for you. This shift in perception allows you to seek out individuals whose interests align with your own, creating connections that energize and support you rather than draining your energy.

Yes, it seems like part of the challenge is finding friends in adulthood that align with your interests and values. What are some methodologies in going about finding new friends and maintaining them?

This is when I encourage people to step out of their comfort zones. Often, we find ourselves expecting things to change or improve without taking any action ourselves. My advice is for people to reflect on their interests and actively seek out groups or communities where people are already engaged in activities they enjoy. This is a great way to meet new people and expand their social circle.

It is quite common to hear individuals express their desire for new friends or question why they don't have any, all while spending their days immersed in Netflix, hoping that friends will magically appear. In such situations, it is important to approach the matter with care and empathy while challenging their behavior so that it aligns with their desires. It becomes clear that in order to achieve a different outcome, something must change.

What are some additional healthy communication strategies and how might those strategies or communication styles change based on the context of the type or level of friendship?

When meeting someone new, you won't know their true character or personality from the outset. Openly sharing your own preferences, as well as encouraging them to do the same, can greatly facilitate understanding. At times, individuals can be rather ambiguous about their desires, often seeking input with questions like, "What do you think?" while withholding their own preferences. In such instances, expressing your own preference can be immensely

valuable, as it alleviates the burden of guessing your desires from the other person. Moreover, adopting a more open and direct approach can be achieved by utilizing "I" language. For instance, when addressing a concern with a long-term friend, it is more effective to express your feelings using statements like, "I feel disappointed because I was genuinely looking forward to meeting up with you this weekend," rather than making accusatory remarks such as, "You are unreliable" or "You are disappointing." By starting with "I" statements, the focus remains on your own emotions, avoiding judgments or hasty assumptions about the other person's behavior. Consequently, they are more likely to be receptive to your perspective and less defensive. Employing "I" statements as is generally beneficial, particularly when attempting to address relationship issues.

What are some challenges and techniques that we can use when it comes to forming a deeper relationship and bond?

Some effective techniques include maintaining frequent and regular contact, as well as consistently following up. It is not uncommon for individuals to feel that they are always the ones initiating contact, which can create a sense of unfairness. However, it is crucial for them to reflect on their ultimate goal in the friendship and take proactive actions that contribute to achieving that goal. If the desire is to develop a close bond with a friend, it becomes essential to take the necessary steps to foster that closeness. Without being proactive, it is challenging to effectively meet one's goals.

In situations where people are not taking action towards their goals, they may find themselves harboring resentment when their needs are not being met. However, it's important to note that these needs were likely not clearly communicated in the first place. In general, the key is to have open, direct, and assertive communication in relationships. By doing so, it reduces the reliance on mind-reading or guesswork, which can be both exhausting and ineffective.

How do we have communication that is proactive and assertive without being aggressive?

Assertiveness and aggressiveness are very different communication styles. Assertiveness creates a win-win situation while aggression will always result in a win-lose situation. When being aggressive the person is saying, "I don't want this. Let's just do this". On the other hand, assertive communication is an open conversation where you are very clear about what you want while being considerate of others and keeping their needs in mind. When someone adopts an aggressive communication style, they may convey a message like, "I don't want this. Just do it my way." In contrast, assertive communication involves engaging in an open conversation where you express your desires clearly while considering the needs of others.

You've mentioned words like "open" and "assertive" to describe healthy communication among friends. Could you provide some other words that you would use to characterize good communication?

In addition to being open and assertive, effective communication should also be characterized by clear, direct, and to the point. It's important to emphasize that the tone of your communication matters. You can convey your thoughts clearly and directly while maintaining a kind and considerate tone. Tone is important because a strong or harsh tone can be perceived as aggressive. For instance, when deciding on a place to eat, you can express your preference in a straightforward manner that effectively communicates your desires, all while remaining respectful and avoiding any condescension or meanness.

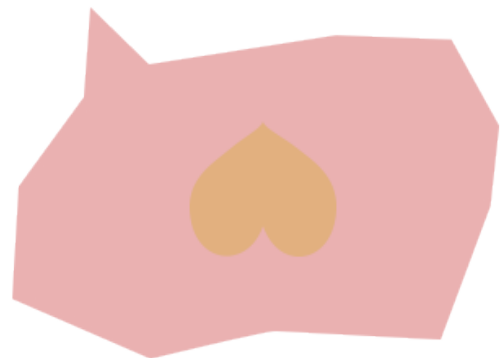
So, by creating an open and receptive atmosphere, you are essentially encouraging others to be assertive and express their desires. However, at some point, isn't it necessary to find a middle ground or have one person compromise their wants?

Yes - you can model the behavior you desire by demonstrating that it is safe for others to state their preferences without fear of offense. To foster open communication and encourage others to express their preferences, you can actively create a safe environment where they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without the fear of judgment. For example, you can express openness to various options

or inquire if there are any specific foods they would like or dislike. By reassuring others that certain topics or preferences can be freely discussed without anger or judgment, you can promote a culture of open communication and encourage others to share their perspectives more readily.

Do you have any closing thoughts or tips on the subject of communication within friendships?

The main thing to take away from this conversation is to refrain from mind-reading. Relying on guesswork and predictions is often ineffective because it frequently fails to align with what others truly want or need from us. When we act based on assumptions, there is a risk of becoming upset or feeling unappreciated if our actions do not align with their actual desires. Instead, it's important to consistently ask your friend about their thoughts and desires, enabling more effective communication and nurturing healthier relationships.



The Friendship Spectrum

Explore the different levels of friendship and how understanding them can benefit our personal and interpersonal lives



Whether we acknowledge it or not, there comes a time in everyone's life when we examine the friendships in our lives (often more than once!). Sometimes we feel like we can't connect to those around us or don't feel supported by those closest to us.

By understanding the levels of friendships in your life, you can create the boundaries and expectations around those friendships which, in turn, creates healthy and successful friendships. According to Glenda D. Shaw, friendship expert and author of [*Better You, Better Friends: A Whole New Approach to Friendship*](#), there are 4 levels of friendship: essential friends, collaborators, associates, and mentors/mentees. By considering these levels of friendship, and your approach to how you view and relate to your friends, you can create deeper bonds and more meaningful connections.

Each level of friendship is profoundly important. By examining your friendship at each level, you can get a better understanding for what you can offer each other. Some friendships offer emotional support, while others offer career or personal development. More so, it's important to note that friendships aren't stagnant - they can evolve over time.

A consistent examination of your friendships can help align your needs as people and circumstances change. Doing so, will allow you to direct your energies towards what benefits you and your friendships most and allow for fulfilling friendships at every level.

1

Essential friends

Essential friends are those you consider your closest friends and part of your core circle. These friends align with your values and support you at the deepest level. This isn't to say that conflict doesn't arise. However, when it does, you and your essential friend can easily address any problems and come to a resolution.

2

Collaborators

Collaborators are contextual friends that come at a very specific time in our lives. They fulfill a current need, making them temporary friends until your needs or circumstances change. You might not spend as much time and energy on your friendship with collaborators and, while you may spend quality time with them, there are more unspoken boundaries set with them than there are with essential friends.

3

Associates

Associates typically revolve around a specific interest, hobby, or work. Since the connection is around a specific activity or interest, there is much less emotional expectations and bigger boundaries set.

4

Mentors & mentees

Mentors are people who can help guide us through a transition in our lives. Mentees, on the other hand, are those seeking guidance from us. Unlike the other levels of friendships, the relationship between mentor and mentee is asymmetrical - there is an underlying power dynamic.

What do you do to cultivate your friendships?

We ask our community to share their stories and experience on cultivating their friendships. Whether it's in person or virtual, frequently or infrequently, there are several ways to help your friendships grow.

VOLUNTEER

A few years ago I started volunteering at my local SPCA. I met a couple of really cool people and we shared our love for animals. The more we talked, the more we bonded and became close friends.

- Sarah

GET OUTDOORSY

I recently moved from Seattle to San Francisco for a job. In an effort to meet new people, I joined a hiking meetup. I met a bunch of outdoor enthusiasts and now spend more time outside of the meetup group.

- David

START A HAPPY HOUR

I had been working at my company for a few months and wanted to start connecting with my coworkers outside of work. I started planning a happy hour every week and it helped me get to know them better.

- Steph

FIND WORKOUT BUDDIES

After the Covid-19 protocols lifted in SF, I was eager to get out there and meet new people. I used to work out a lot, but that mostly stopped during the pandemic. I started going to the gym regularly and met a couple of workout buddies. Now, we meet every few days at the gym, which has strengthened our bond and it helps us keep accountable with our fitness journey.

- Anish

RECONNECT WITH OLD FRIENDS

I had some changes in my life happen about a year ago and I realized that I didn't have a very good support system around me. So, I started reaching out to friends that I had lost touch with and we reconnected.

- Helen

BEFRIEND OTHER PARENTS

When I became a mom for the first time, I connected with other parents in my neighborhood. We shared our experiences and still talk to this day.

- Liz

Each friend
represents a world in
us, a world possibly
not born until they
arrive, and it is only
by this meeting that a
new world is born.

- ANAIS NIN