

## Lesson 8: Friendship and Solidarity

### PURPOSE

To motivate students to pursue friendships of excellence in their lives.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand and explain three types of friendship
2. Recognize friendships of excellence in their life

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- How to find a Good Friend
- Aristotle's Three Types of Friendship
- Case Studies on Different Types of Friendships

### VOCABULARY

- Friendship of excellence: friendship based on pursuing excellence for oneself and others

### PROCEDURE

**Step 1:** Review the previous lesson and have the students recall the vocabulary definition of creativity.

**Step 2:** Explain that in this lesson, the class will deal with the topic of friendships of excellence. Have the students read the text [How to find a Good Friend](#). Discuss the questions and answers associated with the text as a class. Ask students to share what they think are important characteristics of a true friend? After listening to the student's comments, suggest some other important characteristics of a good friend:

- Good friends respect one another's dignity
- Good friends are loyal, they do not abandon you easily
- Good friends give you support when you need it
- Good friends always treat each other as subjects, and never merely as objects

**Step 3:** Introduce the students to Aristotle, an important Greek philosopher who wrote about many things, including friendship. Aristotle identified three types of friendship, ranked from what he called “lowest” to “highest”. These three types of friendships he calls: friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure and friendship of excellence:

**Friendship of Utility:** A friendship of utility is when someone is friends with another person in order to get something from them. For example, if someone spends time with a fellow student just because they’re smart and will give them the answers to their homework, but otherwise doesn’t really want to hang out with them. That is a friendship based on utility. Or, when someone becomes a friend with another person who is popular so that they can be seen as more popular. Aristotle says that this is the least true type of friendship since the other person is treated as an object - using them for the sake of gaining something from them. It is also very unstable - as when one stops getting something from the other, they stop being friends.

**Friendship of Pleasure:** Friendship based on pleasure is the second type of friendship Aristotle defined and it occurs in situations when a person’s main motive for being friends with another person is to make themselves feel better. For example, it happens when a person is friends with another person because they make them laugh, feel good, or because they like being in their company. As the text the students have read suggests, these things are good to have in every friendship, but they should not and cannot be the only basis of a true friendship. As the author says: a TV show can make you laugh too. Aristotle’s main point is that pleasure (enjoyment), should not be our only or main motive. If pleasure is the main motive of friendship, then in hard times when there is no pleasure, the friend will leave. Also, it will be impossible to strive for excellence if the friendship is only based on pleasure.

**Friendship of Excellence:** Friendship of excellence exists when friends want to pursue excellence together. In a friendship of excellence, friends always respect each other’s dignity and treat each other as subjects and never use the other person for their advantage or pleasure and they want the best things for that person. Aristotle argues that there needs to be more than just pleasure or utility to have a true friendship - this is excellence.

Write the definition of friendship of excellence on the board:

Friendship of excellence: friendship based on pursuing excellence for oneself and others

Friendship of excellence is the most stable kind of friendship, and the most lasting. True friends remain close even in difficult times. Of course, a friendship of excellence is a lot of fun, too. The main challenge with this type of friendship is that it can be more rare. That is, we don't just hang out with whoever is around (convenience) or because they make us feel good about ourselves or it's pleasurable (because they have the best stuff at their house or their parents are never there, etc). Friendship of excellence is wanting what's best for yourself and the other. Friendships of excellence motivate you to pursue human excellence.

**Step 4:** Divide students into groups and ask each group to work on one of the [Case Studies on Different Types of Friendships](#). The groups should examine examples of different friendships and try to determine which of Aristotle's categories of friendship the example belongs. Give the students the [Three Types of Friendship handout](#) to refer to when working on the case studies.

After the groups finish working, ask them to present their cases in front of the others and discuss the questions as a class. Lead the class in discussion on the basis of the Teacher's Answer Key provided.

**Step 5:** Summarize. Recall Aristotle's three types of friendships, as well as examples for each type. Motivate and encourage students to live friendships of excellence in their lives.

## HOW TO FIND A GOOD FRIEND

Someone once told me that a best friend is someone who makes you laugh. I have some funny friends, but my favorite TV shows make me laugh too. I heard a Youtube influencer say that a friend is someone who “makes you feel better.” A friend of mine once told me that I might not want to pursue a career as a comedian, since my jokes weren’t *that* funny. That definitely didn’t make me “feel better”! But later, once the sting went away, I realized he was trying to help me by giving me his honest opinion. So, it’s good when a friend makes you feel better, but maybe true friends are those who also help you see your real self better.

At lunchtime, I would always hear this one group of people talk about how many “crazy things” they did with their friends. But I noticed that they were often doing a lot of things that weren’t so much “crazy” as harmful or thoughtless towards other people. They talked a lot about their weekends, but they didn’t seem as happy during the week as they did in their selfies. And once these friends were apart from each other? They would always complain about each other! That was definitely enough to make me realize that I didn’t want that kind of friendship.

A true friend is someone who speaks with integrity, whether you’re in the room or not. As for fun times, a good friend should want to hang out with you when things are fun and also when you need to talk through something difficult in your life. Good friends are proven in bad times. Anyone can be around when you’re doing well, but it takes a strong friend to be there when life is difficult, too.

Have you ever experienced telling someone a very personal story just to hear someone else answer, “a similar thing happened to me...” as they take the opportunity to then talk about themselves? Friendship should be more person-centered than self-centered. Because, most importantly, a true friend is someone who genuinely, really, wants what’s best for you. I knew two guys, on my old soccer team, who helped each other to be better. Whenever one of them would skip practice or wouldn’t do well in a match, the other would be there to encourage him and push him forward. And they were like that off the field, too. Once, one of them was going to break up with his girlfriend via text message, but the other told him not to be a coward and to talk to her about it in-person. As one teacher said: “Surround yourself with people who want the best for the best part of you.” In other words, good friends motivate you to strive for excellence.

Finally, friends sometimes leave. What I mean is that when a friend becomes a bad influence, sometimes the other friend needs to create some distance to follow the right path. Obviously, a good friend shouldn’t become a bad influence in the first place.

But, if this happens, the hard but best choice is to find new friends who want to strive for excellence. This doesn't mean abandoning our friends in need. When a friend is in trouble, be there for them. But if they become trouble, sometimes the best way you can help them (and you) is to walk away. (We all know what this means: alcohol, drugs, irresponsible behavior, fights, skipping school, you name it.) If you continue to strive for excellence, you'll eventually find others like you. You'll also be a leader for your friend, showing them that there's a better way and that you'll be there for them when they want true friendship.

**QUESTIONS FOR A DISCUSSION:**

1. What does the author say are some of the most common misconceptions about friendship? Do you agree?
2. What are the important characteristics of a good friend according to the author? Do you agree?

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**How to Find a Good Friend - Answer Key for the Teacher**

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- 1. What does the author say are some of the most common misconceptions about friendship? Do you agree?** The author mentions three misconceptions about being a good friend: that a best friend should always be able to make you laugh, that friends make you feel better, and that friends do crazy things together. He says that all of this is important, but not enough to form a true and lasting friendship.
  
- 2. What are the important characteristics of a good friend according to the author? Do you agree?** The author mentions four characteristics of a good friend: a friend is there when it gets hard, a friend is someone who has a real interest in you, a good friend always motivates you to be better, and a friend can take a step back if the other person becomes a bad influence.

**ARISTOTLE'S THREE TYPES OF FRIENDSHIP**

	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Problems / challenges</b>
<b>Friendship of utility</b>	A situation where one person is friends with another to get something from them	Someone is good at school so another person spends time with him and asks him to do his homework, but otherwise doesn't care at all for him.  Someone becomes a friend with another person who is popular so that they can become more popular.	It is the least good type of friendship since the other person is treated as an object, for the sake of a certain advantage.  It is also very unstable – when one stops getting something from the other, they stop being friends.
<b>Friendship of pleasure</b>	It happens in situations when a person's main motive for friendship is pleasure or enjoyment.	It happens when a person is friends with another person because they make them laugh, feel good, or because they like being in their company.	In hard times when there is no pleasure, the friend will leave.  Also, it will be impossible to strive for excellence if the friendship is only based on pleasure.
<b>Friendship of excellence</b>	It happens when the friends want to pursue excellence together. Friends always respect one another's dignity and treat one another as subjects and never use the other person for their advantage or pleasure.	The two boys who played together on a soccer team (in How to find a Good Friend) helped one another to become better versions of themselves.	It is very hard to achieve, people need to work hard to strive for excellence and constantly work on their friendship.

**CASE STUDIES ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF FRIENDSHIPS****Case Study 1:**

You have the best grades in class and you sometimes help other students with their homework and studying. This is not something you usually enjoy doing, so when people ask you to help them, you do it, but you make sure you show others that this bores you. There is one specific student in the class who is not very good at math, so you help him often. When you're helping this one person in particular, you make sure not to show any signs of boredom or annoyance, since you usually go to his place and play video games after school. He is an only child and always has the newest, most exciting games. When he gets a good grade in school, his parents often buy some new games for you to play with him. Your birthday comes and your parents decide to reward you for your good grades and buy you something you've wanted for a long time. They buy you a new gaming console and a gaming chair. You start playing games from home and become really good at it. When that same friend asks you to help him with his homework, you respond that you don't have time. You are happy that you can now play the best video games from home, and that you don't need to go to his house or help him with homework.

**Questions for a discussion:**

1. What kinds of friendship do we find here? Why?
2. Is this friendship lasting? Why?
3. How can this become a friendship of excellence?



**CASE STUDIES ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF FRIENDSHIPS****Case Study 2**

You just started high school and you don't know anyone. On the first day of school, you make a friend and you start talking about a city you both visited. It seems that you have a lot in common. Last Saturday night, you had a sleepover together with some other friends, which everyone enjoyed. A few months later, you find out that your parents are getting a divorce. This upsets you and you find it harder to focus on your schoolwork. You talk to your friend about the problems you have at home. She listens sympathetically and says she's really sorry. You mention the subject a few more times when you are hanging out and she suggests that you need to go out more and not think about it so much. At school you learn that she organized a sleepover with your mutual friends and she didn't invite you. Afterwards, she starts spending more time with the other girls who came to her sleepover. You still talk to each other, but your friendship is different now than it was before. She likes to go out with other girls, talk about music and TV shows, and high school crushes. You are often not in a mood for talking about that, but you would still appreciate it if she would invite you. However, the other day you hear her telling another friend how you only talk about depressing things and that she has decided to ignore you.

**Questions for a discussion:**

1. What kind of friendship is this? Why?
2. Is it lasting? Why?
3. What could both friends do to make this a friendship based on excellence?

**CASE STUDIES ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF FRIENDSHIPS****Case Study 3:**

You are friends with two other students in your class. You have known each other for years. You are all neighbors and spend a lot of time together. All of you take piano lessons at the music school. You like to practice and then show each other what you have learned. You also help each other to practice when someone doesn't feel like practicing that day or has a problem with learning their music. For the last three weeks, one of your friends hasn't been studying at school or practicing piano like she normally does. You know she is having some problems at home, which is likely why she can't focus properly. You and the other friend go on walks with her and invite her to your place to help her with studying. She sometimes likes to talk for a long time about the things that are bothering her, and sometimes she doesn't talk much, but you still invite her because you want her to know she has friends. The other day, she skipped class together with two other students. They bought a pack of cigarettes and smoked them in a nearby park. When she came back, she said she felt great and that cigarettes are really relaxing. You said that this is only temporary and it will not help her to deal with her problems. She said you don't understand her and that you judge her without knowing how she feels about it. Her other friends said that it was fine since it helps distract her from her problems and makes her feel better. Since that day, she's started doing this more and more. She has been spending more and more time with a group of boys and girls who are into partying, drinking, and other kinds of things. You want to talk to her and tell her this is not good for her, but she won't listen. You tell her that you can't support her behavior and that you don't want to join her in doing all of the things that she is doing. You don't spend as much time together as before, but you told her that you're still her friend and that you're there for her.

**Questions for a discussion:**

1. What kind of friendship is this? Why?
2. Is this a friendship based on excellence in every situation?
3. What could each friend have done differently or better?

**Case Studies – Answer Key for the Teacher****Case Study 1:**

**1. 1. What kinds of friendship do we find here? Why?** The first friend is helping the other with homework and studying, which is certainly a good choice. Nevertheless, the reason why he does it is because he wants to play new video games at his house, not because he cares about his friend and how he is doing in school. The other friend probably invites the one who is better at homework to his house to play video games because he wants help with his writing homework and studying. This seems to be a friendship based on utility, since both friends are using the other to gain some sort of advantage.

**2. Is this friendship lasting? Why?** This friendship is not lasting, as no friendship of utility is or can be. As soon as the first friend gets his own video console and gaming chair, he stops going to his friend's house and helping him with his homework.

**3. How can this become a friendship of excellence?** This friendship would turn into a friendship of excellence if both friends strove for excellence together. This means that the first friend should help the other with homework and studying even if he has his own video console to play. The friend who needs help with homework should also be thankful to the other friend and see how he can be a good friend in return.

**Case Study 3:**

**1. What kind of friendship is this? Why?** This is a friendship based on pleasure, since the primary purpose of friendship for both friends is the enjoyment they get from spending time together.

**2. Is it lasting? Why?** The friendship is not lasting, as no friendship of pleasure is. When the first friend starts to have problems, the second friend listens at first, but gets bored and perceives the other friend as a downer. As soon as the first friend does not want to do “fun stuff” anymore, the second friend stops spending time with her and hangs out with new friends.

**3. What could both friends do to make this a friendship based on excellence?** Friendship for excellence is based on making excellent choices, which involves supporting a friend when he or she is going through a hard time. So, instead of finding new friends when the friendship is no longer as “fun” as it used to be, the friend should support her friend who is feeling sad. We can expect that by doing that, their friendship will become deeper and stronger, which will make the time they spend together more fun and enjoyable.

The girl who is going through a hard time can be more assertive and direct in talking to her friend and expressing how she feels about their relationship. By expressing her need to talk about the problem she is facing and not just do “fun stuff”, she can give the other friend the opportunity to understand how she feels and to be a support to her.

**Case Study 3:**

**1. What kind of friendship is this? Why?** This friendship starts as a friendship for excellence, since all three friends support each other in making excellent choices (e.g. practicing piano, studying). When one of them starts having problems, the other two are supporting her in studying, talking to her and listening to her, etc.

**2. Is this a friendship based on excellence in every situation?** The situation changes when the girl who is having problems starts making non-excellent choices (smoking, skipping school...). The first friend continues to motivate her to make excellent choices and thus practices friendship for excellence. The other friend is not pursuing a friendship of excellence, since she says that it is okay to smoke and skip school if it makes her feel better. Since true friendship requires that all friends pursue excellence together, the first friend is doing the right thing when she decides not to hang out with the friend who has started behaving problematically. She is also being a good friend in saying that she'll be there for her if she wants to change her behavior in the future.

**3. What could each friend have done differently or better?** The girl who started behaving problematically should obviously have chosen the excellent choices, with the support of her other friends. The first friend is doing well in not supporting her non-excellent choices, and she should consider if there are more effective ways to reach her friend who is in trouble. The second friend should not have supported her non-excellent choices and go the easy way by saying that it is okay to do these things if it makes her feel better.