

## 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?