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Friendship Matters

or

*"It's the friends you can call up
at 4 a.m. that matter."*

Marlene Dietrich

Dear Colleague,

[National Senior Independence Month](#) is observed every year in February. This month brings awareness to the importance of sharing resources with others as we age with the goal of living the most independent and full lives possible.



Shoring Up Friendships and Living a Full Life



I am always looking for an opportunity to take up the mantle and shout from the rooftops that if you have friends, you can live fully even when you experience some of the realities of aging that may feel limiting.

Friendship can be defined as a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people. In all cultures, friendships are important relationships throughout a person's life span.

As I age, I realize how much I need and rely upon friendships. During the pandemic, some friends have fallen by the wayside for lack of contact or due to me having the extra time to reflect on whether they were actually serving my need for affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust in another person.

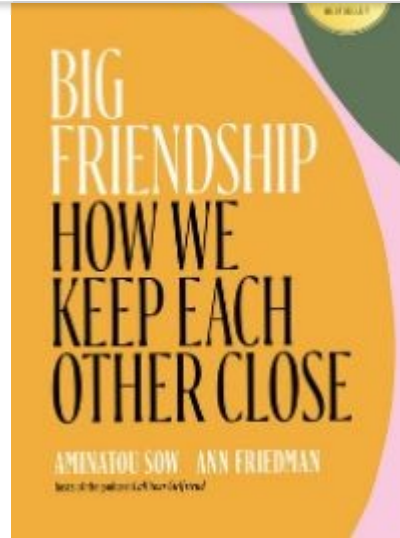
In this "unfriending" process I learned that friendships are fragile. As opposed to other kinds of relationships (co-workers, family, etc.), people can **choose** friends to cultivate a deeper relationship with each other. That choosing is mutual. There are periods of returning to or renewing your friendship. Both parties must make the choice to go forward, deepen the friendship or move in another direction that may or may not sustain the friendship. It doesn't always make sense to continue in a friendship, despite the number of years invested. Is this a bad thing? Probably not if you seek a truly reciprocal relationship.

What does all of this tell us?

Perhaps one thing is that a solid and enduring friendship requires time, effort, and investment.

There are some good resources

is the book [Big Friendship](#) by Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman. They argue that some friendships are so important that they deserve the same attention as romantic relationships. Why not?



There has been relatively little research done on friendship (as opposed to families, marriage, couples, parenting, etc.). I was stunned to learn that the percentage of Americans who say they don't have a single close friend has quadrupled since 1990 ([Survey Center on American Life](#))! And a separate study noted that people's friendships turn over by 50% in a seven-year period.

I am humbled when I realize that friendships are the rare kind of relationship that can remain forever available to us as we age. Friendship can be a potential source of creativity and renewal in our lives as we consider the goal of National Senior Independence Month, living the most independent and full lives possible.

**Take a moment to consider the words of a song
by Pascal Leboutin on Friendships:**

*You left a mark in my mind that I never could erase
Took a piece from my heart that nobody could replace
Nobody could replace you
You are the eye in the storm, you're the piece I try to find
When I'm out in the cold, you're the one that's on my mind
I will search until I find you.*

it that they satisfy in you?

Do you have a friend that became “the eye in the storm”? What was the storm? How did they provide refuge for you?

Is there a friendship that has been lost along the way that you would like to return to? Is there something that you could do to start moving toward that friend again?

So aptly voiced by The Beatles: *“I get by with a little help from my friends”*; and during this time of coming back together after too much separation and isolation, reach out to those who get you through the days, weeks, and years.



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In friendship, Deb



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