



# The Treasure Trove Of Friendship

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**H**umans are social beings. We desire attachment right from our inception into this world and learn a great deal from each other than from any other medium. Our relationship and bonding with parents and parental figures, guides the development of our personality and our ability to form and maintain relationships. This means that a stable and continuous upbringing can enhance emotional development, as well as build a reserve for effective coping. Whereas fragmented formative years can make us fragile and isolative.

Whilst a positive personal background may help take roots, and arguably make

us more resilient, we need an ongoing supportive network to improvise with life and hurdles, and cruise effectively through the waves of experience. Unlike family relationships, our friendships are formed by personal choice, without the formality of legal ties. But, like family relationships, however, friendships can span our entire lifetime. Our journey to happiness is made more enjoyable in the company of close friends and family.

There are indeed various kinds of friendships. Close friendships enhance our self-esteem and help us emote, share fears, secrets and desires. Other not so close or casual friendships allow us to learn and grow. Of all the various

kinds of friends we make, the most valuable ones are the ones in whom we confide, have deepest connection with and trust. In all its forms we need a network of relationships.

It is indeed true that a lot can be said about a person by knowing his associates and friends. It's very like the Spanish saying, "*Dime quienes son tus amigos y te diré quien eres,*" which means, "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are."

## Defining Friendship

We have recently been audience to a new ad jingle *jo mera hai woh tera*

*hai..!* (What is mine is yours and vice versa). It's a line which has been heavily emphasizing that friendship equates to sharing. It represents unspoken feelings amongst people who recognize this special relationship called friendship. And indeed, every friend is important and the people we choose to have around us make our world.

## Friend Or Acquaintance?

Although friendships and acquaintanceships are things that span across the same continuum, there are differences. An acquaintance is a person known to one, but usually not a close friend. However, if there is consistent demonstration of certain features such as reciprocity, understanding, compassion, honesty and support, then an acquaintanceship can turn into friendship. The conversion is more likely when one experiences a level of comfort in the company of the other to be oneself and express self fearlessly and even make mistakes without being judged.

## The Things That Good Friendships Bring

Throughout history, much has been written about the benefits of friendship on individuals as well as society. Conventional wisdom is that good friendships can have a major impact on your health, happiness and wellbeing. To put it simply – friendship means support, sharing and joy.

Several studies have supported the notion that good social support equates with healthy life and longevity.

Within the mental health arena, social support equates with reduced susceptibility to stress, stability of mental health, fewer reoccurrence of illness and better reintegration in the society. Indeed the direct effect of friendship is that the seemingly unsolvable problems become solvable, and mountains become molehills.

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## In The Pink Of Health With Friends

- ◆ Enhanced self-esteem and confidence and thereby the reduced risk of psychological problems like anxiety and depression.
- ◆ Enhanced sense of belonging and security, which contributes to emotional wellbeing and development.
- ◆ Having a network of friends increases physical and mental activity levels.
- ◆ Research has shown that people with close friendships are more likely to exercise regularly, avoid excessive alcohol and even be more inclined to quit smoking.
- ◆ Studies have proved that support can reduce blood pressure and even protect against dementia (the illness of forgetfulness).

Friendships have an important influence on our attitudes, behaviour and development. This influence can be either positive or negative. For example, the positive effect of close friendships is better psychological adjustment and social development, whereas the negative effects include learning a maladaptive behaviour or picking up bad habits from close friends.

