

Cultivation of Friendship within Epicureanism

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 16, 2022 at 9:50 PM

How to improve existing friendships, from a NY Times article:

Quote

5 ways to make your friendships closer

If you want closer friendships, the first step is to decide you’re going to do something about it. “We think about relationships as things that happen to us, but the truth is that we make them happen,” Dr. Johnson said. Getting closer to your existing friends requires making the time and being intentional.

Once you have determined to work on your friendships, here are five techniques to try.

1. Create a foundation of security (hint: Answer that text)

Before we can attempt closeness, we need to have security. Through his research, Dr. Levine has identified the five foundational elements of secure relationships, which he refers to as CARRP.

- **Consistency** (Do these friends drift in and out of my life on a whim?)
- **Availability** (How available are they to spend time together?)
- **Reliability** (Can I count on them if I need something?)
- **Responsiveness** (Do they reply to my emails and texts? Do I hear from them on a consistent basis?)
- **Predictability** (Can I count on them to act in a certain way?)

Once these five elements are in place, it can pave the way to a deeper connection. “From an attachment perspective, once we feel safe, we can start being more adventurous and playful, which helps us at work, raising our kids, in every aspect of our lives,” Dr. Levine said.

That doesn’t mean that you have to respond to texts within the hour, but it does mean that you need to create a baseline of responsiveness and availability so your friends feel secure in your friendship. Likewise, if you have friends who are flaky, unresponsive or unreliable, it will serve you to try to see if they can become more CARRP and if not, look to other people for close friendship.

“We often tell ourselves that we shouldn’t care if somebody cancels plans or we can’t count on them, that we should be more laid back and stop being so needy, but that’s

the same as fighting against biology,” Dr. Levine said.

2. Pay close attention

The next step of creating close friendships is to just open your eyes. Humans have a unique ability to read emotions by mimicking subtle facial expressions.

“Intimacy starts with attention and attunement,” Dr. Johnson said. “When you look at somebody with your full attention, your face muscles start to mirror their facial muscles within milliseconds. If you aren’t giving them your full attention, you can miss it completely.”

This mimicry helps us empathize with the emotional experiences of the other person. The next time you’re with a friend who is sharing something about his or her life, Dr. Johnson suggested that you look that person in the face and give your full attention. This will create a psychological sense of connection. “As bonding mammals built for connection, this makes our nervous systems hum,” she said.

3. Let yourself be known

If you want to be seen for who you are, you have to be willing to stop pretending to be somebody cooler or smarter than you are. Admit that you binge watch “Honey Boo-Boo,” are jealous of other people’s accomplishments or don’t always brush your teeth before bed. Make that goofy joke. Share that less-than-flattering detail.

“You have to try to help people understand and accept you, which conversely means you have to understand and accept yourself enough that you believe you can make somebody else’s life brighter just by being in it,” said Donald Miller, author of [“Scary Close: Dropping the Act and Finding True Intimacy.”](#)

In his 40s, Mr. Miller said, he had a successful career as an author and public speaker and an audience that adored him, but lived without true intimacy in his life. Determined to connect with others, he learned that the only way to get the intimacy he was searching for was to start being more honest about who he was.

Helping people understand and accept you may sound intimidating, but getting started is easier than you think. Dr. Levine suggests that the next time you’re with a friend, start diverting the conversation into exposing more vulnerability. When your friend responds in a way that feels supportive, give positive feedback by saying how helpful that was, or what a good perspective your friend has on your situation.

4. Take your friends on a test drive

Most of us would consider a close friend somebody we could call in a pinch. But if you, like me, have a romantic partner or live close to family, you might rarely find yourself in a pinch that requires a friend. I recently had to undergo a minor medical procedure and my husband wasn't able to go with me. "Why don't you call one of your friends?" he asked me the night before, naming a couple of friends who might be available. I didn't have a good answer. Sure, these were pretty good friends, but were we medical-procedure close?

When I posed this situation to Dr. Levine, his suggestion was simple: Take them for a test drive. "Ask for help even when you don't need it so that when you truly need them, you'll feel more comfortable reaching out and you'll have a better sense of how they will respond."

He suggested that the next time I had an issue — a tricky work situation or I needed help coordinating a birthday dinner — I should go out of my way to lean on a friend. Not only is this a low-risk way of testing how reliable a friend is, it also builds closeness. "When we give someone a chance to show up for us, we pose an opportunity for greater bonding and closeness," Dr. Levine said.

5. Accept that closeness isn't one-size-fits-all

I asked the same question of everyone I interviewed for this article: How much closeness do we need? Each person gave a different answer, each of which boiled down to this: It's not that simple.

Dr. Chen said that it varied from person to person; some of us need dozens of connections, some of us need only two or three connections, but we all need some closeness to others. Dr. Johnson emphasized that building intimate connection in our love relationships is even more essential than building it in our friendships. Mr. Miller said that it had to be the right people. Dr. Levine mentioned that being able to confide in somebody or call in an emergency is only one type of closeness, and not necessarily the only important kind.

What all of the experts agreed on was this: Intimacy with other people — whether it's a spouse, a family member or a friend — is one of the most profound ways to be happier, healthier and calmer. As Dr. Levine said, "It's so potent that it will work much better than any Xanax out there."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/20/sma...riendships.html>

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