HOLSTEE

Kinship Guide

Exploring the art and science of Kinship

Kinship

The word kinship has many different meanings. It's not just about the family we are born into, it's about the connections we share with those around us.

Now, perhaps more than ever, we need to notice our collective light so that we can brighten the way for each other.

Experience your own light by seeing it in others.

Kinship *noun*

kin·ship | ˈkin-ˌship

1. a feeling of being close or similar to other people or things

Cambridge Dictionary © 2020

In this guide, we explore the many ways you can foster new and old connections in your life.

On the following pages we share poetry, philosophy, and a range of activities to help you reflect on the role Kinship plays in your life.

Use this guide as a tool to grow your self-led mindfulness practice as well as create deeper dialogue with your community.

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,

With conquering limbs astride from land to land;

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame

Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name

Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand

Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command

The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she

With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Warm-Up

To kick things off and get in a Kinship mindset, let's first think about the connections we've made throughout our lives.

What qualities do you look for in a friend? **Get creative! Illustrate or write what comes to mind.**

Wanna go deeper? <u>Underline</u> the qualities you offer in your friendships.

"Each friend represents a world in us, a world not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born."

ANAÏS NIN

Aristotle on Friendship

We begin with the ancients — more specifically, Aristotle and his famous 10-volume treatise Nicomachean Ethics. At the core, there's a ton that's still the same about friendships as thousands of years ago. Guided by Massimo Pigliucci, author of Answers for Aristotle, as well as the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, let's take a closer look at Aristotle's writings on friendship.

Aristotle classified friendship (philia) into three categories:

Of Pleasure:

A friendship of pleasure is one built solely on experiences that bring you happiness or joy — fun times, good conversations, positive experiences, etc. Aristotle says these friendships are for the young because, "the things that please them change as their age alters; hence they both form friendships and drop them quickly."

Of Utility:

A friendship of utility is one from which you gain a tangible benefit. Aristotle writes that this type of friendship can be shallow or fragile as it's built on unstable circumstances: when the need or ability to meet it is no longer present, so too goes the relationship.

Of Virtue:

For Aristotle, the highest form of friendship is one in which both individuals wish good on the other for the other's sake (eunoia). He writes, "The perfect form of friendship is that between the good, and those who resemble each other in virtue," because virtue is unchanging. This type of friendship requires a deep knowledge and understanding of the other, and takes time and intimacy to form, which makes it rare, but also more powerful and enduring.

The lesson for us is not that friendships built on elements of pleasure or utility are bad — in fact, both elements can be present in friendships of virtue. But for Aristotle, true, lasting friendships can't be based on utility or pleasure alone, and **our most enduring relationships are ones built on a mutual desire of the best for one another.**

What friendship(s) throughout your life align mostly closely with Aristotle's definition of a friendship of virtue? **How has it/they impacted your life?**

> Gathering matters because it is through each other that we figure out what we believe.

PRIYA PARKER

"The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Types of Connection

<blockquote>
"Aristotle's opinion was that friends hold a mirror up to each other; through that mirror they can see each other in ways that would not otherwise be accessible to them, and it is this (reciprocal) mirroring that helps them improve themselves as persons."

— Massimo Pigliucci, "Answers for Aristotle"
</blockquote>

This month's theme of Kinship covers a lot of ground. Kinship generally refers to the system of social relationships connecting people in a culture and plays an important role in most people's lives.

For the ancient Greeks, one word to cover all the types of human connection was not going to cut it. **They had six words to explain the different types of relationships we may experience during our lives:**

1. **Eros** for sexual passion

2. **Philia** for deep friendships, the most revered by the Greeks

3. **Ludus** for playful, whimsical, young flirtatious love

4. **Agape** for familial love for all, including strangers

5. **Pragma** for longstanding love, or love developed over time

6. **Philautia** for love of self, and how too much can lead to narcissism

We found it helpful to consider the relationships we've had within these categories, how some evolve from one into the other with time, and how a meaningful partnership can have aspects of more than one of these types. **For now though, we'll focus on 'Philia' or the type of love we have for friends.**

Individual:

The term friend often gets commodified (thanks, social media). And while being open to new people and making connections is important, we know that in friendship (and many other things) quality is more meaningful than quantity: fostering those friendships isn't as simple as clicking "Accept".

In his "Rhetoric," Aristotle defines one feeling of philia as a motivation towards selflessness, or wanting the best for someone for their sake and not one's own.

Close your eyes and consider a friendship that rose to this level of philia. **Share three adjectives that describe your relationship with that person:**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What makes a friendship like this one different from others you have?

What have you learned from it?

If you were to write a short note expressing gratitude to this person for being in your life, what would it say? Bonus points if you share it with that person!

💛 Taking time to reflect on friendships like these reminds us of the incredible value they bring into our lives.

And now that you're in the mindset of thinking about your important relationships, consider some you may have accidentally put on the back burner lately.

Who are three people you've been meaning to get in touch with?

1.

2.

3.

What did these relationships mean to you? How did they impact your life in the short term and long term?

These three exercises are built to help you **reconnect with someone who means a lot to you but maybe you haven't spoken to recently,** or perhaps a relationship that has recently been put aside. They are listed in order of difficulty, but we promise you can handle all three!

Easy: Thinking of You

Choose one person you haven't spoken to in the last month to send a quick text. Something as simple as "Hey you just came to mind, so I wanted to send a quick hello." You will literally make their day.

Moderate: Call 'Em Up

Schedule a catch-up call with someone you haven't talked to recently. Offer a specific day and time to chat (none of that vague "Let's catch up!" stuff). Here's an example: "Hi! I know it's been a little while since we last talked, but I'd love to hear about what you've been up to. No pressure at all, but are you free for a short call on Sunday afternoon?"

Challenging: Gratitude Visit

This exercise comes from Dr. Martin Seligman, the founding father of Positive Psychology. Think of someone who once did or said something that changed your life for the better, and write a letter of gratitude outlining what specifically the person did for you and how it affected your life. Then, call them up, schedule a time to sit with them and read the letter to them. We know this sounds tough, but connecting with someone deeply often requires vulnerability. **You can do this!**

What did it feel like to reach out? Were you nervous? Was it easier than you thought? What did you find challenging?

Community:

In the first few years of Holstee, we found ourselves meeting and coming across so many remarkable people. But after a while, the rush of meeting so many people wore off, and we wanted to build depth. This led to one of our favorite Holstee traditions: hosting potluck dinners. Bringing friends new and old together over dinner is a powerful experience — and hosting as a potluck makes the process fun and easy.

We challenge you to host a potluck dinner this month, inviting friends you've known or someone you've just met. Here are a few tips to get you started:

Real Food: We encourage our guests to bring a savory dish (to avoid a meal full of sweets) and a beverage. Real food means minimal processing and hopefully homemade. Bonus points for a dish that comes with a story.

Real Community: When dinners take place in a home, it can change everything. Our dinners started out in our East Village apartment with guests sitting on any surface they could find. Despite the limited space, we found that it's the small details that help to create a special and memorable evening. For example, asking guests to take their shoes off when entering, suggesting people who know each other already not to sit together, etc. Consider sending a connecting email to all guests at the end that will allow the conversations to continue.

Real Conversation: We are not big fans of events where people pitch their work and everyone's first question is, "So what do you do?" To avoid this, we pose a single thought-provoking question that we ask the whole table. For example, "What are you most looking forward to in the year ahead?" ★ The Holstee Reflection Cards are a collection of our favorite dinner table questions.

The Self:

It's important to remember that friendship isn't just about how a relationship can enrich our own lives, but also about what role we play in our friends' lives. Try and answer these questions honestly, and use what you come up with to intentionally move forward in your friendships.

In what ways could you improve as a friend? **Has there been a time in which you should have put your friend's needs before your own and didn't?** Have you ever betrayed a friend's trust?

In what ways are you a good friend?

"To be fully seen by somebody, and then loved anyhow—that is a human offering that can border on miraculous."

ELIZABETH GILBERT

Feel the Connection

According to The New York Times bestselling author A.J. Jacobs, we are all part of the same massive family tree. The idea behind his newest book, It's All Relative, is that if we really explore how we are connected (even through our DNA), then we can be more accepting of each other.

Here are a few fresh ways to connect with the people in your life:

Warm up

Turn off all social media for an afternoon and go for a walk with a friend. Instead of sticking to your default conversation topics, try asking questions that are out of the ordinary. Listen carefully — no distractions or expectations. Just be with that person, fully.

Reach further

Visit that elderly relative you haven't seen in years. Yes, she's 92 and always forgets your name. Visit anyway. Bring bagels and watch the sky through her window. Ask her about her childhood or just enjoy the moment together.

Bring it home

Connect with your local community by inviting your neighbors over for a potluck brunch. We often see them but rarely get the chance to know who they are. Building relationships with your neighbors (young and old!) will make your 'hood feel like home.

After each of these experiences, write down three things you noticed and reflect on what you learned.

Warm up:

01

Reach further:

02

Bring it home:

03

"I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship."

BRENÉ BROWN

Social Support

In our increasingly busy and digitally-connected world, it's easy to lose track of the important people in our lives and what they mean to us. The double-edged sword of social media is that it can help us connect with friends, family, and community while also making us feel isolated (recent studies echo this major downside).

This exercise is designed to help you reflect on those in your life who make your days better and the unique role they play. Don't limit yourself to the people you see every day: think about your extended family, someone you may want to get to know better, a co-worker, an old friend, or maybe even a furry companion.

Try to think of one friend who fits each role:

Who in your life would you want to go on a road trip with?

Who do you go to for advice around a major life decision?

Who would you be excited to pick you up from the airport?

Who would you drop everything for in a moment of need?

Who gives the best movie, book, or music recommendations?

Who in your life is most reliable?

Who would you trust with a secret?

Who in your life knows you best?

Who have you shared the most laughs with?

Who will always pick up the phone when you call?

🙌 Let them know! Send a message to one (or all!) of these friends and set up a date for coffee, dinner, a video chat, or a long walk one day this month. Share with them what they mean to you and why you're grateful for their friendship.

> " Pull a thread here and you'll find it's attached to the rest of the world."

NADEEM ASLAM

Inter-being

> *We think we have a self. But there is no such thing as an individual separate self. A flower is made only of non-flower elements, such as chlorophyll, sunlight and water. If we were to remove all the non-flower elements from the flower, there would be no flower left... Humans are like this too. We can't exist by ourselves alone. We can only inter-be.*

THICH NHAT HANH

On the next page, try to name at least 20 parts of you that come from other sources.

Examples: Your love of olives (from Mom), Your compassion for strangers (Dad), patches of dry skin (the tap water in New Jersey).

PERSONALITY

SKILLS

PHYSICAL

DISLIKES

LIKES

OTHER

Reflect & Discuss

Use these questions for self-reflection or to spark meaningful conversations.

ICEBREAKERS

Who was your first true friend?

01

Can you ever have too many friends?

02

Describe something you've learned from someone younger than you.

03

In what period of life did you make your closest friends? How did those friendships form?

01

How does vulnerability play a role in your friendships?

02

Who do you always turn to in a moment of crisis? What is it that makes them so reliable?

03

Is it better to let relationships ebb and flow or intentionally maintain them?

04

"To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world.

D R .   S E U S S