





Kinship



*Experience your own light by
seeing it in others.*



HOLSTEE

WELCOME TO

Kinship

- 3 *Introduction*
- 4 *Kinship in Poetry*
- 5 *Warm-Up*
- 6 *Aristotle on Friendship*
- 8 *Types of Connection*
- 10 *Friendship*
- 11 *Rekindling Relationships*
- 13 *Building Community*
- 14 *How We Show Up*
- 15 *Active Listening*
- 16 *Feel the Connection*
- 17 *Brené Brown's Vulnerability Myths*
- 19 *Social Support*
- 20 *Inter-being*
- 21 *Reflect & Discuss*

CLICK TO JUMP
TO A SECTION!



GET TOGETHER!

Get the most out of your membership and meet others in the Holstee community at an upcoming member gathering! Learn more and RSVP: holstee.com/gathering



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 | 'kin- ship

A feeling of being close or similar to other people or things.

Cambridge Dictionary © 2022

In this guide, we explore the many ways to 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 to 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
Glowes 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!”

Emma Lazarus

Warm-Up

To kick things off and get into 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? Underline 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

Click on bars like these to open a new journal entry in Reflection.app with the prompt ready! **Bonus:** As part of your Holstee Membership, you get Premium access to Reflection.app — click now to give it a try!



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP →

Aristotle on Friendship

We begin with the ancients – more specifically, with Aristotle and his famous 10-volume treatise Nicomachean Ethics.

At the core, much about friendships is the same now as it was 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 into **three categories**:

1 OF PLEASURE

A friendship of pleasure is one built solely on experiences that bring you happiness or joy — fun times, good conversations, positive activities, 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.”

2 OF UTILITY


A friendship of utility is based on need, and is one from which one or both people 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 the ability to meet that need, is no longer present, so too goes the relationship.

3 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. He writes that, “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.

“ *Anam is the Gaelic word for soul and cara is the word for friend. So anam cara in the Celtic world was the ‘soul friend.’* ”

JOHN O'DONOHUE

-  **What friendship throughout your life aligns mostly closely with Aristotle's definition of a friendship of virtue?**
- How has it impacted your life?**



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP →

Types of Connection

Kinship also refers to a system of social relationships that connect people within a culture – ones which play an important role in most people's lives.

“ *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

The ancient Greeks had **six words** to explain the different types of human connection we may experience during our lives:

Agape: universal love, including love of a higher being, family, nature, and the less fortunate

Eros: romantic, passionate love

Philia: deep friendships based on selflessness and shared virtues (the type of kinship most revered by the Greeks)

Philautia: love of self (too much can lead to narcissism)

Storge: familial affection, such as the love between a parent and their offspring

Xenia: generosity and hospitality towards those away from home

We find it helpful to consider our relationships with others through the framework of these categories: how some evolve from one type into another over time, and how a meaningful partnership may have characteristics of multiple connection types.



In the next activities we'll focus on **Philia**, the deep love we have for friends.

REFLECTION IS KEY

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

Friendship

In today's world, the idea of a **friend** has been somewhat commodified (thanks, social media). While being open to new people and making connections is important, with friendships, as with many other things, quality is more meaningful than quantity — fostering true friendships isn't as simple as clicking “accept.”

In his book *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 has risen to this level of philia.



List three adjectives that describe your relationship with this person.

- **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?**

Consider sharing your note with this person!



COMPLETE THIS ACTIVITY AS A
SPECIAL GUIDE IN REFLECTION.APP →

Rekindling Relationships

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



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

- **What do these relationships mean to you?**
- **How have they impacted your life in the short- and long-term?**

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



EASY: THINKING OF YOU

Choose one person you haven't spoken to in the last month and send them 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 meet in person or video chat, and when you are together read them the letter. 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?**

“ *Pull a thread here and you'll find it's attached to the rest of the world.* ”

NADEEM ASLAM



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP →

Building Community

In the first few years of Holstee, we found ourselves meeting so many remarkable people. After a while, the rush of meeting lots of new people wore off and we wanted to start building 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 potlucks make the process fun and easy.

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

REAL FOOD

We encourage friends to bring a savory dish (to avoid a meal full of sweets) and a beverage. Bonus points for homemade dishes that come with a story!

REAL CONVERSATION

“So what do you do?” is a common go-to question that often inhibits deeper connections. To minimize this, at our dinners we focus discussion on people's interests by posing a single conversation-starter question to the whole group. For example, we might start with “What has captured your attention lately?” and move on to a deeper question later into the gathering.

REAL COMMUNITY

When gatherings take place in a welcoming environment, it creates a community. Our dinners started out in our tiny East Village apartment, which could be very welcoming despite its size. Thoughtful gestures helped us to create special and memorable evenings — for example, we asked our guests to take off their shoes and get comfortable when entering, introduced people who hadn't yet met and encouraged them to sit near each other, etc. After hosting a dinner for friends, consider sending a connecting email to all guests that will enable conversations to continue.

WANT MORE IDEAS?

We've compiled our 100+ favorite questions for sparking conversation in our [Holstee Reflection Cards](#).

How We Show Up

It's important to remember that friendship isn't just about how a relationship can enrich our own lives – it's also about what role we play in our friends' lives.

Use what you come up with during this activity 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 a 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



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP →

Active Listening

Listening is the first step in any meaningful relationship.

Active listening for many of us does not come naturally. It takes practice. Allowing others to truly feel heard is an incredible gift. Try putting this into practice during your next conversation!

You are practicing active listening when you:



Give your **full attention**, avoiding any distractions



Focus on what the speaker is saying, rather than what you plan to say



Are **open minded** and withhold judgment



Avoid trying to **fill** every moment of silence



Paraphrase what you've heard and repeat it back



Ask questions that lead to a **deeper** level of understanding

“ Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens.

JIMI HENDRIX

Feel the Connection

According to *New York Times* bestselling author **A.J. Jacobs**, we are all part of the same massive family tree.

The idea behind his 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 two fresh ways to connect with the people in your life:

1 WARM UP

Call a friend you know well. 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.

2 REACH FURTHER

If possible, schedule a video chat with an elderly relative you haven't spoken with for some time. Yes, they're 92 and always forget your name — that's OK. Ask about their childhood and share a story about yours. Ask for advice. Most importantly, be in the moment with them, even if from afar.



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



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP →

Brené Brown's Vulnerability Myths

“ *The difficult thing is that vulnerability is the first thing I look for in you and the last thing I’m willing to show you. In you, it’s courage and daring. In me, it’s weakness.* ”

BRENÉ BROWN

We’ve all been there: consumed by what others might think, wondering if we’re good enough, feeling like we don’t belong. So we tuck away these thoughts and feelings in hopes of shielding our perceived weakness. But all too often these myths just prevent us from being seen by those that matter most.

Myth:
Vulnerability is weakness.

In Action:
“I’m weak for feeling scared about this.”

01

Myth:
I don’t do vulnerability.

In Action:
“Nope, I don’t let myself feel vulnerable. This will either work or not.”

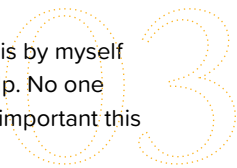
02

Myth:

I can go it alone.

In Action:

“I can get through this by myself without anyone’s help. No one needs to know how important this is to me.”



Myth:

I can be vulnerable without feeling uncomfortable.

In Action:

“If I do X, Y, and Z, then it is guaranteed that my uncertainty and discomfort will disappear.”



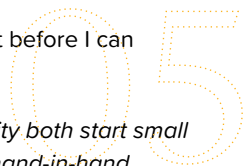
Myth:

Trust comes before vulnerability.

In Action:

“I need their absolute trust before I can share how I really feel.”

Note: Trust and vulnerability both start small and slow, and they grow hand-in-hand.



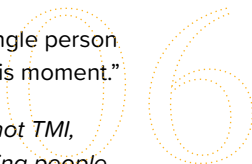
Myth:

Vulnerability means sharing all the personal details of my life with everyone.

In Action:

“I have to tell every single person how scared I feel in this moment.”

Note: Vulnerability is not TMI, oversharing, or shocking people.



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 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.



Try to think of one friend who fits each role in the questions

below. Don't limit yourself to the people you see every day — think about extended family, someone you want to get to know better, a co-worker, an old friend, or maybe even a furry companion.

- 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.



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP →

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



Try to name at least 20 things about you that come from other sources, especially people.

When doing this exercise we like to use categories like Personality, Skills, Physical, Dislikes, Likes, and a catch-all Other.

EXAMPLES:

My love of olives (from Mom)

My compassion for strangers (from Dad)

Patches of dry skin (from the tap water in New Jersey)



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP →

Reflect & Discuss

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

ICEBREAKERS

*Who was your
first true friend?*

*Who is one of your oldest friends?
What is a meaningful experience
that you shared?*

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

DEEPER QUESTIONS

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

How does vulnerability play a role in your friendships?

Who do you always turn to in a moment of crisis? Describe a time they were there for you.

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

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

DR. SEUSS

Copyright © Holstee Inc. 2022 — This kit is inspired by our readings from Emma Lazarus, Anais Nin, Aristotle, Massimo Pigliucci, John O'Donohue, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dr. Martin Seligman, Nadeem Aslam, Elizabeth Gilbert, Jimi Hendrix, A.J. Jacobs, Brené Brown, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Dr. Seuss.

For further reading and curated resources visit: holstee.com/kinship