



Friendship is Priceless!

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Over the years I have been very blessed by an amazing number of individuals who I class as friends. They come in all sizes, shapes, ages and live in various countries around the world.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* describes a friend as "one whom you know, like and trust". Getting to know someone takes time and effort. It requires dialogue and sharing as well as patience and understanding. Developing the friendship can be an interesting adventure which helps you to expand your own perspectives and about issues and cultures.

Liking another person can be an instantaneous experience or take considerable time to achieve. There is very little in life that is more satisfying than to be together with someone you like and to enjoy laughter, companionship, a conversation or a shared hobby.

Trust is a vital part of any friendship. If you cannot depend on your friend to tell the truth, be there for you when you need support or defend you to others, than your relationship isn't really genuine. Friends promise to be there for you and then live up to their word.

The beauty of true friendship is that it endures the test of time. The other day I heard from a friend who I hadn't seen in a decade. I remarked at the fact that after a few minutes of "catching up", it seemed as though time collapsed, and we were totally connected again.

When I think about my friends, I realize that I truly have the cream of the crop. They care about my growth and well-being. They are there for me in good times and when things are difficult. They know how to give and receive forgiveness. They know everything about me - and love me anyway. Whether we talk every day or once a year, they are loyal.

We all need true friends and those who have several tend to do better than those who don't. In fact, an article in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* described research which began in 1992 in Australia. Scientists concluded that "having friends around in old age can do more for life expectancy than having family members around".

If you feel you don't have enough friends, try joining an organization or playing a sport. Enrolling in a course where you can expand your knowledge or learn a new hobby can introduce you to people who are like-minded. Doing volunteer work can help you develop relationships and improve your community at the same time.

There are different types of relationships. Some people are strangers to you. Others are merely acquaintances. But the people who you know, like and trust are your friends and they deserve to be treasured. An old Nigerian proverb reminds us of this as it states, "Hold a true friend with both your hands".

This week think of those who you call "friend" and consider how you are blessed by them.