

Be a swan, not a duckling

Business



Be a Swan, not a Duckling Everyone has at least one friend. Most people have more than three friends. Some people can even say they have fifty friends. Whatever amount, you have a friend.

A friend to talk to, a friend to laugh with, a friend to cry with, a friend to fight with, a friend that will take the blame when your parents find out you had a party while they were gone. A friend. While growing up, girls may think that their group of five-seven friends that they sit with at lunch are the only people they need to associate with; everyone else is sniped with fiery eyes or just not even worthy to make eye-contact with. As children become tweens and tweens become teenagers, the maturity levels are generally supposed to be increasing. The evil “ cliqueness” of some young girls I notice in high school proves the opposite.

They form flocks and nominate one of the girls to be the head duck and the other girls who don't fit the characteristics to be the head duck are the ducklings, trailing behind. The head duck may seem like a leadership role, but paradoxically, that's the meanest duck, the one duck every other animal in the pond dislikes the most; the duck that controls the other brainwashed ducklings' minds with who they can and cannot associate with. Ducklings are pretty cute, but who wants to be an unheard, small, boring, uniform duckling? They hang out with the other ducklings in their group and never branch out to talk to the swan, perched beautifully and gracefully on the precious stump near the pond. Why? They're afraid. They lack confidence. They lack social skills.

I made my first friend in my kindergarten class when I asked her if she wanted to lay her mat next to my mat at naptime. Thankfully, she did and didn't think I was weird for asking because she didn't know me yet. " Yeah, let's set up right here Layla". Wow, she did know my name. I knew her name. I was always envious of her bright blue laces on her Sketchers she wore most frequently.

As my friendship began to grow with this girl, we began conversations with more girls in the class. We all were nice to each other. We didn't care if one girl's outfit didn't match because she was our friend so we still let her sit at our table. We didn't care if a weird-looking boy asked to sit with us because looks didn't matter; he was a person too, so why wouldn't he be allowed? People are so caught up in their individual friendships and don't realize how ignorant it is to not branch out and get to know everyone. I'm not saying we all have to like each other because not everyone is going to like everyone. Thanks to my grandfather, I know that not everyone I know will like me.

I'm not particularly a fan of everyone I know either. But why enclose yourself in a bubble of the sameness when God has offered difference? As females grow up, they tend to shuffle in and out of friend groups so much. (We are, I admit, more dramatic than the male gender.) The falling out's may be due to fighting over why one girl's ex-boyfriend liked her " best friend's" selfie on Instagram or finding out that the girl you thought had your back talks a lot of crap about you when you're not around. It could even be due to the fact that you've been replaced with someone else.

You weren't fun enough to hang around with so that jerk found a new friend. Or, in my case, it could just be because of patience. " Not everyone is going to like you Layla. Plain and simple." My mother was the author of those two sentences, I could predict these two sentences every time I'd come home from middle school and complain about mean girls who I thought were my friends told me that my outfit didn't match.

I was devastated every time. Friends aren't supposed to make you feel bad about yourself. At that time, I took it so literal like it was the end of the world. Thank goodness I left that sensitive, wussy Layla behind when I entered high school because the girls are even crueler. Why should I have to put up with mean behavior when I have the accessibility to nicer people's friendship? When I realized a way to avoid this harsh bully-like treatment from my so-called " friends", I found freedom; the swan found her wings.

She made new friends. My friend group in middle school exemplifies the head duck and the ducklings example quite precisely. I wasn't the head duck, but rather a duckling. I played sports with these girls; therefore, I hung around with them often. I liked them, but as we completed grade after grade, I began to realize that I was different from these girls. I didn't enjoy talking crap about the overweight girl in Social Studies class or about the nerdy boy who didn't know his fly was undone.

I was the person to go up to that boy and start a conversation with him, discretely and quietly sneaking in the words " Check your zipper", so only his cheeks blushed instead of his whole face becoming tomato-like if the whole class heard me. I knew he didn't have many friends because he always

worked alone, so on the next project, I asked if he wanted to be my partner. I'll never forget him saying, " I'd love to be partners with you, no one ever wants to work with me". Imagine hearing that from a fellow classmate. A piece of my heart broke that day for my friend. This boy may have thought I helped him, but, ironically, he helped me.

He proved to me that interacting with not strangers, but rather, people you don't acknowledge because you've never took the chance to meet them, encourages growth socially and internally. That day, the swan learned to fly. I believe that it's essential to create a character that will attract various audiences in order to create variety of friendships. Having friends of all sorts is what I value in life the most; I'm able to make completely different memories with completely different people. I'm not the one to get drawn into the mentality that I can only hang around with specific people in order to look " cool". Unfortunately, some people have that outlook and I honestly feel bad for them.

I don't think that being friends with someone means you have to hang out with them and text them all the time. I became good friends with people this year that I didn't talk to all previous years of high school just because I decided to ask them how to do a math problem. I think that being friends with someone could simply be smiling and saying " Hi" to them in the hallway. You never know how much it could make the other person's day knowing you said a simple " Hi". I feel blessed for the opportunity to form a variety of friendships, especially with one girl whom I've never got the chance to know until this year.

I only knew Courtney's name while entering my senior year of high school. I didn't know who she was, what she's been through, how smart she was, what she liked, what she disliked; I didn't know anything about this girl because I never had any classes with her. We had mutual friends, but never really talked individually. I currently have two classes with Courtney and because of them, she's become someone I can call a true friend. I was struggling with a problem in Physics class and Courtney was in my assigned group at the time. I was kind of forced to consult with her because she was part of my group but as time passed, I didn't only talk to her when I needed help with a problem in Physics.

I began to come to Courtney when I had a problem in my life. She brought such life to every conversation with her positive attitude that I enjoyed talking to her because I knew it would brighten up my day even for a moment. Having such a great friendship with Courtney now—which could have just been a friendship of asking her for the Physics homework every night—makes me feel gracious that I had the confidence to branch out and see who she really was on the inside, not just the outside. It amazes me how many people there are in the world that I will never have the chance to meet and become friends with. I know you may think I'm weird for even thinking that could happen but think about it: there's approximately 7.

125 billion people living their own lives in their own house with their own families and their own friends in their own town. I think that's amazing. I aspire to be friends with everyone. Well, maybe not everyone, but I believe we were put on this Earth for many reasons, one being the freedom to be

friends with whoever we choose. These friends may be for life or maybe just for a semester.

Either way, we should value the ability we have to branch out and start these honest friendships. Our friends comfort us, they love us, they know us. I think all my friends are “cool”. I don’t think people shouldn’t be defined solely based on outside features. I understand that some people are granted with a more outgoing character than others, but that doesn’t mean those introverted people will never be able to venture out of their comfort zone. I believe they will if they realize the various opportunities it may bring socially.

I’m thankful that I have obtained the confidence to reach out and meet new friends because I did not acknowledge how much of an impact some individuals have on my life, prior to getting to know them. Do I have the same friendship with that girl from kindergarten? Unfortunately, we went out separate ways when beginning high school. I’ll still say “Hi” to her in the hallways, but we don’t hang out outside of school. It’s okay though because even though, we aren’t necessarily “best friends” anymore doesn’t mean I despise her. Am I still friends with that boy that forgot to zip his fly after using the bathroom? Not really, but it never fails to put a smile on my face when I see him belly-laughing with his lunch table hysterically, holding his stomach because it hurts from the laughter.

Obviously, I’m still friends with the blond girl from Physics class; she’s the funniest girl I know. These beautifully souled people are the reason I’m thankful for my confidence, my wings, my ability to fly, the swan I have

become. As Joseph Parry once said, make new friends but keep the old, one is silver and the other is gold.