

# Friendships and relationships

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Friends form a very important part of our lives. We need friends to keep us company, talk to, and have fun or even when we are undergoing tough times. Perhaps, this is because friendships are the only form of unconditional relationships between people since they come together unintentionally. Even though people may have different kinds of friends, there are some general ideas or characteristics that friendships share in common (Bech and Davies, 1997). Most friendships are built on the basis of individuals being willing and able to invest their time, effort, thought or even feeling.

Another factor that brings friends together is having emotional closeness whereby individuals feel a sense of togetherness and company when they are around their friends. This may come as a result of communication between them and also through doing things together. Acceptance is another characteristic of friendships. Friends accept us just the way we are even with our several flaws. Trust also forms a key component of friendships. It involves the belief that a friend will be not only dependable but also reliable.

However, trust is a quality that needs time to develop fully. Besides, support is an important pillar in friendships as friends require the support of each other during happy or sad times as well as times when one requires a helping hand (Levine, 2009). Friendships, just like other relationships, have to undergo some development process in order to be fully defined. A great number of friendships evolve through a series of stages. Researchers have come up with a model of five development stages.

However, not all friendships have to necessarily follow the sequence of stages as outlined since friendships are voluntary. One stage of development is the role-limited interaction stage which involves the first contact between friends. This is barely the initial stage, and nothing much takes place between individuals. Then, the next stage involves the creation of friendly relations whereby people get to know each other a little better by interacting further. As the interaction progresses, people start moving towards friendship which is the third stage.

Here, people move from social roles to more casual disclosures although without much trust. Beyond this stage, the friendship moves into a nascent or embryonic phase. Now, here people can call each other friends and begin to work out rules for their relationship even though they are not aware of the rules until a later time. Thereafter, friendship enters a stabilized stage which forms the final phase. At this stage, friends develop a high level of trust between them and do things together more often.

Even though friendships are involuntary unions, often they follow some norms that regulate various aspects of interactions. However, when friends cease to invest in friendships, what they share is likely to fade away which is also caused by several other reasons like the lack of commitment, communication or broken trust (Bech and Davies, 1997). This explains that friendships also face challenges. These can either be internal tensions or external pressures. Internal tensions that affect the relationship between friends can be categorized into three groups: relational dialectics, diverse communication styles, and sexual attraction.

Relational dialectics involve the opposing human needs that create tension and propel change in close relationships, for example, connection or autonomy, openness or privacy, and novelty or familiarity. Diverse communication styles, on the other hand, are basically about misunderstandings that arise due to varying cultural backgrounds. Sexual attraction can also cause difficulty between friends as it causes tension over sexual attraction or interest between heterosexual women and men, and this can lead to broken trust if one person makes a move. External forces or pressures can also lead to waning friendships. These arise from outside sources such as competing demands, personal changes, and geographic distance.

These may cause us to neglect our friends and lose contact with them (Levine, 2009). Friends need to establish good communication guidelines between them in order to counter such challenges. These are the principles of good interpersonal communication that include engaging in dual perspectives by understanding our friend's feelings, perspectives, and thoughts even if we do not necessarily agree with them. It is all about putting ourselves in their shoes. Another principle is being able to communicate honestly. This may not be an easy thing to do at all times, but it is very important, however, unpleasant at times especially when a friend seeks your opinion on certain things.

A third principle for forming rich friendships is to be open to diversity in people (Bech and Davies, 1997). Friends grow from their differences and diversity. Last but not the least, learning to accept each other despite their shortcomings is also another way to overcome challenges that face

friendships. In short, friendships grow gradually by undergoing a development process. However, friends share common values that define their friendship.

This relationship between friends is without challenges that rock it, and this can only be countered by coming up with good communication guidelines and principles that regulate it (Levine, 2009). Committed romantic relationships are relationships between individuals who assume that they will be primary and continuing parts of each other's lives as romantic intimates created and sustained by unique people who cannot be replaced in most cases. It involves romantic and sexual feelings. Romantic relationships form three dimensions that comprise intimacy, commitment, and passion. Passion describes intensely positive feelings and fervent desire for another person.

It not only involves sexual feelings but also exceptional emotional, spiritual, and intellectual attraction. However, passion is not the primary foundation for most enduring romantic relationships. Lasting relationship requires something more durable which is commitment. This is the intention to remain involved with a relationship out of will. The third dimension is intimacy which describes feelings of closeness, connection, and tenderness.

It underlies both passion and commitment (Bech and Davies, 1997). Different people love differently. There are three fundamental styles of love namely eros, storge, and, ludus. Eros is a passionate and powerful love style that emerges dramatically and suddenly. It is regarded to be an intense type of love that can involve sexual, intellectual, spiritual, or emotional attraction or all of these.

It is the most intuitive and spontaneous of all love styles. Storge, on the other hand, is a rather comfortable type of love based on compatibility and friendship. Storgic love tends to develop gradually and to be peaceful and stable. It often grows out of common interests, values, and life goals. Ludus, however, is a lighthearted adventure full of challenges, puzzles, and fun, but love is not to be taken seriously without commitment.

Secondary styles of love are also divided into three categories, namely pragma, mania, and agape. Pragma love is more practical whereas mania often involves experiences of emotional extremes, ranging from euphoria to despair. Agape love is love without expectation of personal gain or return (Levine, 2009). Romantic relationships just like friendships also go through a development process. Individuality which is the first stage of a romantic relationship basically defines the needs, goals, love styles, perceptual tendencies, and qualities which in turn affect what we look for in relationships.

The next stage involves the invitational communication stage in which people signal that they are interested in each other by responding to invitations from others. Explorational communication is the third stage in the escalation of romance, and it focuses on exchanging information. At this stage, people fish for common interests and grounds for interaction. The fourth growth stage is intensifying communication where partners spend more time together, and they rely less on external structures by getting themselves involved so much such that they feel that they can hardly do without each other. Revising communication, although it is not a stage in the development, of all romantic life relationships is important when it does <https://assignbuster.com/friendships-and-relationships/>

occur. Navigation is the ongoing process of staying committed and living a life together despite ups and downs and pleasant and unpleasant surprises.

Relational deterioration, on the contrary, happens through a five-stage sequence: intra-psychic processes, dyadic processes, social support, grave-dressing processes, and resurrection processes (Bech and Davies, 1997). In conclusion, romantic relationships often experience unique challenges.

These challenges can be met by four communicating guidelines that include dual perspective, which is an understanding of our own perspective as well as another person's perspective, thoughts, feelings, needs among others while also practicing safe sex by engaging in talk about it. Devoting oneself to managing conflict constructively in relationships is also another guideline. Last but not the least, the challenge of long-distance relationship can be countered by adapting to constant communication.