

It takes courage to be a friend

Spelling errors done on purpose, punctuation etc. ignored on purpose.
Read at your own peril !

When we are born the only emotional attachment we have, is to the person taking care of us , usually our mother.

By the time we learn how to walk and talk we are starting to be aware of the different ways we respond to each other and how to interact with others . We learn how to love and trust. we learn how to be “friendly” and how this behavior is rewarded in kind by others.

It actually doesn't take long for a toddler to learn that temper tantrums get you nowhere and biting is not an acceptable way to communicate your displeasure.

So, by the time we enter Kindergarten the notion of a “friend “ becomes much less abstract , we have been taught to share and play nice and we figure out the first rules of being a friend to give and take ,and soon we know who will gladly let you be the “mommy” when playing or that we don't mind being sidekick on that all important rescue mission with the boy who has that really big firetruck, we are developing friendships, minus the occasionally melt down over right of possession of that red ball !

Social interaction gets a bit more complicated when we enter school .before long we deal with a whole range of human emotions ., from love, loyalty, acceptance, tolerance and caring to the ugly side of jealousy, disrespect , betrayal, hurt and every nuance in between . It is

a tough and difficult path we have to negotiate , hopefully without getting hurt . We have to deal with peer pressure and the need to fit in and the endless other hurdles we have to overcome on the path to maturity and adulthood .

So how wonderful is it to have a good friend to help you sort things out , shares your interest , who laughs and cries with you & listens to your dreams , doesn't judge you, the one who is " the wind beneath your wings" . A BFF , a bestie, a buddy , a pal Forever , or until someone better , smarter , more fun comes along ... oh yes, many a young heart has been broken over friendship gone wrong and many a poem has been written on that same subject.

Quite a load to carry, not only to deal with all your own insecurities but how do you separate the "good friend " from "trouble" . temptations abound , and we all had to listen to our parents who warned us , or stories told about the bad influence of a false friend!

What draws us to a person , what makes a good friend? and why do we sometimes choose the wrong one and have a difficult time letting go.

The need to be included, be accepted when you are young can be overwhelming , it takes great courage to be selective and to be true to yourself.

How do you know what a true friend is? Not just a "yeah " sayer, not afraid to tell you how wrong , stupid or unfair you are, but also knows when to be quiet and let you find your own path . A true friend that supports you , that you can depend on that cheers you on , applauds your success and wishes you only the best. The kind of person you want in a friend is the kind of person you should be.

A perfect example of a perfect quote on this subject is by Barbara Kingsolver "the friend who holds your hand and says the wrong thing is made of dearer stuff than the one who stays away.

One of my daily rituals ,that I will defend at all cost, dear Google , is to read the paper, and one of the daily pleasures is to read the 'advice " column. Who doesn't know "Dear Abby's "wisdom , where daily , she who has lived longer in one form or the other for what seems an eternity, advises her "dear reader" about toxic friendships, so called friends who suck the joy out of joy and stress you to the breaking point.

So why is it soo difficult to end a friendship ? why do we insist keeping people in our lives that add nothing positive... is it that we are afraid to admit we were wrong in our assessment of a person's intention and character?.." Anonymous"who we all know well, said :I won't miss you, I will miss who I thought you were" but The Buddah said it even better:An insincere and evil friend is more to be feared than a wild beast

A wild beast may wound your body, but an evil friend will wound your mind.

We live in a time of political turmoil. Politics make for strange bedfellows and once dear friends become a challenge .

What to do ? do I wish them a hearty"Fair thee well" and send them on their merry way? Do I ignore what is an insult to my sensibility? Do I forgo years of friendship ?

Confrontation at any cost? It takes courage to find the solution that is right for you

Thank goodness I found a quote by a person much smarter than I who expresses my sentiment and I will take my cue from Thomas Jefferson , who said "I will never take a difference of opinion in politics, in religion , in philosophy as cause for withdrawing from a friend"

So I don't bring up touchy subjects , dance around them and hope the problem will go away4 years will seem like an eternity of course.....

Thanks to the internet and YouTube we have most likely seen the most adorable examples of unusual friendships , Pit bulls nursing kittens . Barn cats grooming baby chicks and baby goats using the backs of horses as their own jungle gym . yes , sometimes lasting friendships are formed with the most unusual beginnings.

I grew up on a typical German city street, single streetcar tracks , single car traffic , sidewalk a median planted with chestnut trees .

We lived on the 4th floor , able to easily look out to the other side and into the windows of the houses across. One of my school mates lived there, we walked to school together and I knew everybody that lived in that house, including the "Hermit" Frauelein Stricker , who shared her apartment with an elderly Aunt. Confined to the apartment due to neurological and physical damage she received when buried under rubble during WW2. , passed her time knitting beautiful sweaters with intricate designs, using wool from unraveled older garments.

I was about 14 years old , busy performing household chores, when I looked out the window and saw an elderly woman sitting on the window ledge across the street , looking down at the traffic , ready to jump.. screaming in terror to my mother, who told me to run across the

street and try to get some one's attention while she was imploring and begging the woman not to jump.

I wildly hit all the doorbells , terrified beating at the door, my Mother's screams got the attention of the woman's great niece, Frauelein Stricker, who pulled her back to safety.

The woman was placed in a facility where she succeeded in taking her life a few weeks later. I however, started to befriend, Frauelein Stricker.

A heavy smoker and 'connoisseur' of cheap romance novels, that she got from a relative who worked in a publishing house.

The apartment had a peculiar smell , a mixture of stale smoke, wet wool and cheap paper and ink .every day I would spent time with her , run a few errands and read those silly romance novellas to her , acting out the different parts, the Count who would fall in love with the maid being united against all odds. We laughed tears and she would knit her endless sweaters.

I got teased for spending time with "The hermit" but it did not stop me she never chastised me, never questioned all my silly ideas.Never discouraged or criticized me. She just listened, and that's what I needed in those difficult teenage years.

The friendship lasted many years I would write to her about my new life and she would always send me long letters and occasionally a packet of real bad romance novellas !was heartbroken when my mother called me one day to tell me she had passed on .

When I grew up it was still one of the greatest gifts, at about age 12, to receive a "poesie Album" A poetry album , sort of a journal where your friends , family , teachers , neighbors would enter words of wisdom and

maybe a drawing or a picture would be added. We were very proud of the journals , and not without certain competition on who had the most entries.. Facebook you started nothing new !!!!!

I have my mother"s. Mine got lost in one of my many moves. So what a pleasure when on my 50th high school reunion I saw quite a few of these journals with my entries !

I , being of superior intelligence at the time, of course had to write the same words of wisdom in every one of the books in Latin "non vitae sed scholae discimus Seneca" which I understood translated into "not for school, but for life you learn " the fact that in every one of the 6 books I saw ,I had added a drawing of an elephant sporting some flower arrangement, was puzzling , one even had a lovely bunch of daisies sprouting out of it's trunk !

But, the wonderful part is that now ,almost 70 years later, I am still in touch with many of my school friends. Across the ocean, living a much different life . I am very , very grateful for that and all the other life long friendships I have.

A few years ago , while helping at a book sale in Cape Coral, I came across such a journal. It belonged to a young girl that lived on the outskirts of Berlin

Her name was Christa, the entries cover the years from 1946 to 1949. I picked the journal out of the trash ... I tried to find some of the people , to no avail. I look at it often , wondering about this persons journey and what courage it took for her family and friends to write loving , uplifting beautiful words for her , despite the sad and difficult times, their world in chaos.

I treasure my friends... yes, Helen Steiner Rice the queen of greeting card poetry said it best "Friendship is like a golden chain , the links are

friends so dear and like a rare and special jewel it's treasured more each year.... Now I'm sure your teeth ache now from so much sugar so I'll balance it out with words from Emerson

It is one of the blessings of old friends that you can afford to be stupid with them!

Go in any hallmark store or in the greeting card aisle of your super market and you will see what big business "Friendship" is. You can buy armloads of sentimental greetings... it is much easier to express how you feel with a \$3.00 greeting card t .. and even if you dismiss such money making trifle.. secretly we love getting such cards , the sappier the better .. Admit it, it takes courage to mail one of the real sappy ones !

Best Friend .. or not not? History is full of examples of friendships, some gone very , very wrong ,the most famous of all must be Jesus , betrayed by a friend . Julius Caesar murdered by a friend, Benedict Arnold betrayed a nation

And then ,there are endless examples of great fictional friendships, The 3 Musketeers, Sherlock and Watson,Scout and Boo, Crusoe and Friday and in modern entertainment .. Lucy and Ethel , Mary and Ronda , Garth and Wayne,

Sheldon and Leonard and who can forget that scene from Thelma and Louise....

Unusual friends like Mozart and Hayden , Mark Twain and Helen Keller, Jung and Freud T.s Elliot and Groucho Marx... and of course, I must mention Dennis Rodman and Kim Jo Un.

The opinion of the world about American friendship is a mixed bag , we are known to be very friendly , but also accused of this being of a shallow nature.

America finds itself in a rather precarious situation . Once known as the 'FRIEND ' to the world , we seem to be slipping that title , even our closest allies look at us with suspicion and dismay.

The opinion of the world about American friendship is a mixed bag, we are known to be very friendly, but now on the edge of dismissing once stout friends and allies.

Let's be courageous and show the world who we are , open doors, open hearts , open mind !

It's a good thing !

We all need a friend , a BFF , someone who cares for us, but to have a friend you have to be one, nourish and care for your friendships, just like that long neglected Christmas cactus , it will come back to life with just a little TLC and the reward will be spectacular.

My greatest wish for myself when the time comes for the final exit, is for someone to say "I'll miss you , you were a good and courageous friend"

And that , dear friends , I wish for you

CLOSING WORDS

A.A. Miles in his beloved BOOK “Winnie the Pooh”

Teaches in his gentle ways many life lessons, including the meaning of love, courage and friendship.

And so I leave you with 4 of my favorite friendship quotes

You can't stay in your corner of the Forest forever waiting for others to come to you, you have to go to them sometimes.

Piglet asks : we'll be friends forever, won't we ? and Pooh answers "even longer"

And a wonderful Pooh wisdom

A day without a friend is like a pot with a single drop of honey inside.

.... And finally

It is more fun to talk to someone who doesn't use long difficult words , but rather short easy words like "what about lunch "

Thank you