

Mindful friendships

Approaching friendships with mindfulness allows you to cultivate authentic connections that have depth, respect and empathy.

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Practising mindfulness allows you to be present so you can fully embrace the experience you are having in that moment. Being present with another person involves giving them your complete and undivided attention and the space to feel valued and understood.

When mindfulness is added to the relationship mix, connection and empathy are enhanced. Both people have a more positive feeling about each other and the experience they are sharing.

Authentic, unconditional friendship is one of the greatest gifts you can give another person. Approaching the friendship mindfully allows you to cultivate a deep, lasting connection.

What does the research tell us?

A study published in 2014 demonstrated that mindfulness enhanced relationships when it was advantageous to be socially tuned with others. Participants were measured for their degree of mindfulness and then divided into groups to complete tasks. The more mindful group had a more enjoyable experience, were able to complete additional tasks more quickly and had a higher comfort level with their group and similar heart rates to group members. Mindfulness allowed for greater teamwork, cohesion and pleasure.

Healthy friendships

Research also demonstrates the importance of social networks to your mental health and wellbeing. Social connection has been linked to happiness, longevity and resilience. Positive social support is important for your psychological health and has been

shown to be protective against stress. From a physiological perspective, social connectivity has been shown to trigger the release of the feel-good hormone oxytocin.

Having a strong support network can assist you in building confidence and independence. There are times in life when you need to make difficult decisions or push your comfort zones. It's easier to take risks or move through challenges when you have meaningful relationships to fall back on.

Mindful friendships are fulfilling friendships

Have you ever experienced a friendship that is one-sided? Where one person gives freely their time, empathy and advice, however the other person doesn't provide the same level of support in return? These friendships often don't last, as the unsupported person feels devalued and unappreciated. Mindfulness in friendship involves give and take.

Many people experience periods in their life when they are distracted by their own suffering and find it difficult to focus on others. Even during challenging times, mindfulness allows you to ground yourself so that you don't get lost in your own thoughts when attempting to support another person.

It can sometimes be hard to offer support to other people when you are experiencing severe hardship. But the friends you are having open and honest discussions with will have a deep understanding of your situation. They will stand by you, secure in the knowledge that you will return the same level of support when your difficulties pass.



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Being a mindful friend means being fully present for another person by listening intently without distraction. This allows the other person to feel valued and understood.

The benefits of a mindful friendship

Mindfulness in friendship cultivates many important qualities.

1 Deeper listening

Being a mindful friend means being fully present for another person by listening intently without distraction. This allows the other person to feel valued and understood. It also enables you to support them in making important and informed decisions. The more deeply you know a person, the more insightful guidance you can give.

Mindfulness allows you to provide another person with this same safe space in return and provides greater opportunities for both parties to reflect, learn and grow.

2 More empathy and less judgement

Practising mindfulness in friendship allows space for opposing viewpoints. It enables two friends to strongly but respectfully disagree and still maintain their connection. It also involves acceptance around the fact that your advice may not be acted upon and to be prepared to support your friend regardless of their decision. People need the freedom to make their own choices and know that you will support them unconditionally. Assuming that your values aren't compromised, it's not necessary for you to agree with their course of action. You just need to be prepared to continue to support them without judgement if they subsequently fail.

3 Better understanding for another's differences

Mindful friendships cultivate respect. They allow for diversity and acceptance. You can often learn more through spending time with people who have different life experiences and personality traits. We gravitate towards people with similar values. Cultural backgrounds and physical appearance are of low importance when you connect on a deeper level.

Mindfulness also allows you to put yourself in someone else's shoes and see a situation from a different perspective. What is right for one person may not be right for another.

4 Greater authenticity

The most fulfilling friendships are the ones in which you are free to be your authentic self and express your true opinions, dreams and desires without fear of judgement or repercussion. There is safety and comfort in true connection — in feeling seen and heard by another person and being able to speak your truth.

There are still opportunities for disagreement and constructive feedback, but it is done in a respectful way with the receiving person comfortable in the knowledge that their best interests are at heart.

Being mindful and present in a friendship transcends the need for small talk and banter. Conversations are generally deeper, more satisfying and often enlightening.



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Deep, authentic friendship offers more space for mistakes and forgiveness. You commit to being there for all the twists and turns of life.

Mindful friendships are soulful friendships

I am incredibly fortunate to have friends I consider soul mates. Many of them I have known since childhood. I also have a deep friendship and strong connection with both of my siblings.

My relationship with each of these people has developed and changed over the years but has always remained solid. I have invested time, support and love into these friendships and know that the bond will remain for the rest of my life. I don't live in the same state as some of these friends and we don't speak all the time but, as we both put effort into maintaining the friendship, time and distance don't matter. These people have supported me through some difficult times in my life and I have done the same for them.

In all these relationships, I have aimed to be flexible, non-judgmental and honest. I haven't always got it right, but I've been open to learning from that, too.

Mindful friendships are realistic

Friendships aren't meant to be perfect because people aren't perfect. We are human and we make mistakes. Being in a mindful friendship involves accepting this and knowing there will be ups and downs, changes and challenges. Deep, authentic friendship offers more space for mistakes and forgiveness. You commit to being there for all the twists and turns of life.

Interpersonal relationships are often the part of life that can cause the most challenges but can also bring you the most joy. Adding mindfulness to a relationship is how you cultivate a friendship that you can lean on and learn from. A mindful friendship is one that evolves and grows as you do and is with you until the end. 🍷

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