

The Importance Of Meaningful Connections In Self-Care

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In our blogs, we often talk about the importance of self-care. This time we'd like to talk about an aspect of self-care that we haven't discussed in depth. The topic is the importance of friends. You might initially question how friendships are a self-care subject but all kinds of studies and research back up the importance of strong platonic relationships as a factor in one's overall health and well-being. Strong social connections can positively affect depression and blood pressure. Alternatively, lack of them can adversely affect you. For example, women with breast cancer are two times less likely to survive if they do not have a network of friends. To further emphasize how critically important meaningful friendships are, we look to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The first two are strictly physical safety - food and shelter. Ranked third is a sense of belonging, which is fostered by a community of close friends and family. Another interesting fact supporting the importance of friendship is the early age at which we can start making friends. Research gives nine months as the age at which babies start recognizing friendships. Some of the other benefits of having close friends are as follows.

- Emotional and physical support through serious life challenges. If you are going through a serious illness, the support of a friend driving you to doctor's appointments when you are either physically or emotionally depleted is enormous. So is the gift of dropping off meals when you are too sick to cook. Divorce or a break-up is another huge challenge that friends' support is critical as you are losing the other important type of relationship in your life. Loss of a pet or loved one is made survivable and /or more tolerable with the support of strong friendships.

- The reduction of stress in the support of daily life challenges. Venting about the small stuff at work or family life leaves one better able to cope especially if your feelings have been validated. Sometimes we need a friend just to distract us from our problems so we can go back to them refreshed and with more clarity.

- Friends can be good for one's personal development. They can be the first to let you know if some behaviour of your's is less than desirable. They can also be role models as they decide to change their diet or exercise more, inspiring you to join in and do the same. They can be cheer-leaders as you break bad habits like smoking. Being a good friend in return to others, can elevate one's listening skills. It can also help to develop more compassion, responsibility, reliability and trustworthiness. All important qualities in personal growth.

- Many of us have lots of acquaintances but it is close friends that help keep away feelings of social isolation and loneliness. One can still feel lonely in a crowd or if all we have are casual friends. Strong connections can even overcome physical distance.

Emails, texts and phone calls with someone you can be vulnerable with still fill our friendship needs as witnessed by many of us during the pandemic.

Now that we have discussed how important friends are, let's switch gears to recognizing that maintaining friendships requires time, energy and effort. Work and family responsibilities are priorities in most people's lives and can be all consuming if we let them. Self-care is about understanding that in order to be our best for our families and for our career, that we need to reserve time and energy for things that support us to do so. Making the effort to keep a few close friends should be on your self-care list. Just like eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and getting your beauty care needs met at a salon that offers as healthy and non-toxic options as possible! So take a moment to acknowledge the precious friendships you have and let them know how grateful you are that they are in your life.

Because of you, I laugh a little harder, cry a little less and smile a lot more. - Unknown

A true friend accepts who you are, but also helps you become who you should be. - Unknown

The only way to have a friend is to be one. - Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is nothing better than a friend, unless it is a friend with chocolate. - Unknown

I knew when I met you an adventure was going to happen. - Winnie the Pooh