

# What is friendship anyway?

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## Friend **or** Acquaintance?

\* What is a friend?

\* What is an acquaintance?

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## Friendly Acquaintance **or** Mere Acquaintance?

\* What is a friendly acquaintance?

\* What is a mere acquaintance?

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## Good Friend **or** True Friend?

\* What is a good friend?

\* What is a true friend?

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## True Practical Friend **or** True Emotional Friend?

\* What is a true practical friend?

\* What is a true emotional friend?

# What is friendship anyway?

## Friend or Acquaintance?

The notion of friendship usually implies some closeness, and if we say someone is a 'good friend' we usually mean that we know the person fairly well. If we don't we probably say 'acquaintance'.

But some acquaintances we would consider 'friendly acquaintances' and others 'mere' acquaintances. Friendly acquaintances are people we are happy to see if we run into them, we can chat easily enough, but we don't expect anything more. We might invite them to a party, or go with them on some outing, but there is no implication of any commitment over and above that.

A mere acquaintance is someone we might actually prefer not to run into, or could be someone we are happy enough to meet in passing but don't have enough in common to pursue any further.

## Good Friend or True Friend?

A 'good friend' is probably someone whose company we enjoy well enough and is part of our regular social circle. Yet the interests that draw us together might only go so far, so you wouldn't necessarily feel you could call on them for any serious help.

But a 'true friend' is someone you could turn to if you needed some more serious help, perhaps of a practical kind and perhaps of an emotional kind. A true friend is someone you would probably feel comfortable dropping in to see unannounced, and whom you feel you could turn to in a more serious way.

In short, a true friend is one you feel you can depend on to help you, and who wouldn't feel put out that you asked.

## Friend or Family?

One way to clarify what friendship is would be to compare friendship and family. Families - when they function reasonably well - have an implicit commitment to help each other simply from the fact of being family. This is independent of whether the particular members would consider themselves 'friends' in the way they would consider one of their own self-chosen friends to be. One member asks for help and the others simply respond as a matter of course. They don't consider a request for help an impertinence - they simply consider it part of what family means.

When we say someone outside the family is a 'true friend' we mean something like 'one of the family'. That is, we feel free to ask for their help, not worried that they would feel we were 'crossing a line'.

But with other kinds of friends, including many we might call 'good friends', we would feel that such requests would be crossing some kind of line. In other words, we would feel awkward asking for any serious help, and if we did it would signal a significant change in the nature of the relationship.

## Two Kinds of True Friends

But there is a further distinction that is often quite relevant. There can be two kinds of 'true friends', those we only turn to for practical help, and those we only turn to for emotional help.

There are plenty of cases where these two kinds of friendship are mutually exclusive. There are people who might do anything for you of a practical kind; lend you money, help you move house, whatever you need, but to whom you would never turn for emotional sharing.

Then there are others to whom you turn for emotional support, even sharing quite deeply, but who you would never ask for any serious practical help.