



RELATIONSHIPS

REAL BENEFITS OF FRIENDSHIPS

As social creatures, friendships form an essential part of living a fulfilled life.

Friendship explained

The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines a friend as "a person you know well and like, and who is not usually a member of your family." In addition, research in the Journal of Happiness Studies reveals that it's not the "number" of friends one has, but the "quality" of these friendships that make us "happier".

As clinical psychologist Dr Marney A. White, explains it in Healthline, healthy friendship "involves mutual support... and offering a listening ear".

Benefits of friendships

Healthline notes that friendships can "reduce stress and loneliness", and "provide emotional support and a sense of belonging". The Mayo Clinic says that "adults with strong social connections have a reduced risk of many significant health problems, including depression, high blood pressure and an unhealthy body mass index (BMI)."

As noted by Healthline, strong friendships can offer support in challenging times and may make "managing distress associated with problems" easier. A Cambridge University Press study shows that "friendship support... is an important positive predictor of both immediate and later resilient psychosocial functioning in adolescence and early adulthood".

Medical News Today defines emotional support as treating others with respect, showing compassion, support and understanding and being non-judgemental.

Healthline further suggests that friendships "reduce loneliness and social isolation". Loneliness is a state of mind where one feels alone or socially isolated due to a lack of connections with others, explains psychologist Kendra Cherry in VeryWell Mind. She warns that loneliness can have "wide range of negative effects on physical and mental health, such as:

- "Alzheimer's disease progression
- Antisocial behavior
- Decreased memory and learning
- Increased stress levels
- Poor decision-making".

Quality time with "close friends" helps "ward off loneliness and reduce its negative health consequences", says Cherry, noting research that suggests "actual face-to-face contact with friends may help boost a sense of well-being".

The Association for Psychological Science notes research published in the Psychological Science journal, which revealed that healthy friendships with "strong-willed friends" can help influence us to make better lifestyle choices while avoiding negative ones.

Overall, friendships are not only for social connection, but also good for a healthy body and mind.