



RIENDSHIP: An Ageless Healing Balm

Women's ability to nurture friendships may even be one of the primary reasons why they live longer than men. Since the 1970s, study after study has found that friendships and social relationships are good for your health. In fact, many of those studies have implied that without social attachments, you're doomed. In 1979, two researchers who studied the health and social affiliations of nearly 5,000 residents of Alameda County, California, found that they could predict who would die within the nine years under survey simply by counting how many social ties they had. On the strength of this and similar studies, the California Department of Health launched a program exhorting Californians to "*make a friend*" because "**friends can be good medicine.**"

It's ironic that Hollywood is so enamored of the male buddy movie. Some of the most memorable platonic love stories of the screen have paired Newman and Redford, Gibson and Glover, Hoffman and Cruise, no to mention various permutations of the Brat Pack. What's ironic is that this brand of "bond" picture enshrines a relationship that research has consistently shown is about as rare as a hockey game without a fistfight. However, true, yet the most neglected relationship is "women's friendships."

GIRL POWER... "Women at all stages of life have more intimate, close, nurturing relationships than men do." It is believed that women live longer because of their ability to cultivate and maintain close friendships.

That's What Friends are For: Friends are the people who are there to throw you a rope when you're drowning. They're also a buffer against stress and loneliness. The phrase "among friends" can bring with it the same sense of comfort and relief as "home," because friends make us feel we're home.

Friends are sometimes more comforting than family: Friends often do for us what our family can't. We can talk to them about the things that are taboo among family members. "Friends are sometimes less judgmental," and will accept our low moments without a million questions. Take a moment to embrace the wonderful gift of "Friendship" keep him or her close and pray daily for the good LORD to continue to bestow His goodness upon their life.

This month of May increase your Friendships –by incorporating forgiveness as a primary component:

Forgiveness has actually more to do with freeing yourself from harmful energies that can affect your health and well-being than letting someone "off the hook" or approving of their past actions. As they say, "Do you want to be bitter or better?" And it's also important to forgive yourself, if there's anything you may be blaming yourself for.

One good place to start is to try this simple exercise. Sit down with a pen and paper and write down all the things that you consider you have done wrong. Read through the list and then say, "I did the best I could with what I knew at that time. I now forgive myself and set myself free." Then burn or shred the list. Now do the same for any other people who may have hurt you. Insert each name into the statement: "(Your Name) did the best they could with what they knew at that time. As an example I now forgive "Johnny, Kevin or Marie and set myself free."

Something that I draw inspiration from is something that you might find helpful too, my friend. It's called "*Discourse on Loving Kindness.*"

Let your love flow outward through the universe,
To its height, its depth, its broad extent,
A limitless love, without hatred or enmity.
Then as you stand or walk,
Sit or lie down,
As long as you are awake,
Strive for this with a one-pointed mind;
Your life will bring heaven to earth.