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Discover the unexpected ways friends influence our personalities, choices, emotions, and even physical health in this fun and compelling examination of friendship, based on the latest scientific research and ever-relatable anecdotes.

Why is dinner with friends often more laughter filled and less fraught than a meal with family? Although some say it's because we choose our friends, it's also because we expect less of them than we do of relatives. While we're busy scrutinizing our romantic relationships and family dramas, our friends are quietly but strongly influencing everything from the articles we read to our weight fluctuations, from our sex lives to our overall happiness levels.

Evolutionary psychologists have long theorized that friendship has roots in our early dependence on others for survival. These days, we still cherish friends but tend to undervalue their role in our lives. However, the skills one needs to make good friends are among the very skills that lead to success in life, and scientific research has recently exploded with insights about the meaningful and enduring ways friendships influence us. With people marrying later—and often not at all—and more families having just one child, these relationships may be gaining in importance. The evidence even suggests that at times friends have a greater hand in our development and well-being than do our romantic partners and relatives.

Friends see each other through the process of growing up, shape each other's interests and outlooks, and, painful though it may be, expose each other's rough edges. Childhood and adolescence, in particular, are marked by the need to create distance between oneself and one's parents while forging a unique identity within a group of peers, but friends continue to influence us, in ways big and small, straight through old age.

Perpetually busy parents who turn to friends—for intellectual stimulation, emotional support, and a good dose of merriment—find a perfect outlet to relieve the pressures of raising children. In the office setting, talking to a friend for just a few minutes can temporarily boost one's memory. While we romanticize the idea of the lone genius, friendship often spurs creativity in the arts and sciences. And in recent studies, having close friends was found to reduce a person's risk of death from breast cancer and coronary disease, while having a spouse was not.

Friendfluence surveys online-only pals, friend breakups, the power of social networks, envy, peer pressure, the dark side of amicable ties, and many other varieties of friendship. Told with warmth, scientific rigor, and a dash of humor, *Friendfluence* not only illuminates and interprets the science but draws on clinical psychology and philosophy to help readers evaluate and navigate their own important friendships.

Friendfluence: The Surprising Ways Friends Make Us Who We Are Details

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Read2review says

To say this book has shown me a new light, so to speak, on how I look at my friends and the relationships I have with them in a very big understatement.

I found myself learning something new throughout the book. Each chapter offering a new way to look at things, including a chapter on social media which was very eye opening.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and although I found it hard going as it's almost a text book I was intrigued to read more. I read 70% of the book in one sitting because I was so interested in what Carlin Flora had to say.

I read the uncorrected proof and to be honest with an uncorrected proof I expected so many more mistakes than there was.

I liked the way that I was brought into the text through questions and thinking time. It was very well written and I have already recommended it to my Psychology tutor as I feel that her other students would find it useful and that she would enjoy reading it.

I give Friendfluence: The Surprising Ways Friends Make Us Who We Are 5/5.

Eustacia Tan says

I was recently asked to name a few friends, and my first reaction was:

“I don't have friends!”

I might have been joking, but only a little. As much as I liked living in Japan, I went through some serious bouts of “do I have any friends here?” (to be fair, I had those bouts through my school years in Singapore too)

Which is why I picked up this book – I wanted to find out more about friendships and if I was abnormal. I'm still not sure if I'm normal, but I am now more convinced than ever that friends are very important.

Over the course of eight chapters, the book talks about what friendship is and the good and bad effects that it has on us. Basically, although friendship has been talked about since the time of Cicero in 44 BC, it's hard to define what it is because friends can fulfill so many different functions. You can have close friends, and you can have not-so-close friends, but having friends is important. Also, friends fading out of your life is normal – apparently you lose half your friend group over seven years (but hopefully gain more friends at the same time), which makes me feel a little more normal.

We make friends when we share our vulnerabilities with others, but if we overshare too much too soon, that will just torpedo a budding friendship (which explains one of my problems making friends).

Why?

Because we tend to model ourselves after our friends (like attracts like), surrounding ourselves with people we can look up to can help us improve ourselves. Apparently, what our friends do is catching. It also makes us happier, although we all knew that about our friends.

On the other hand, toxic friends can prevent you from making good decisions (by enabling your bad ones) and even “wreak havoc on your health by unleashing inflammation processes in the body”.

The book also brought up a good point that society tends to underestimate the importance of friends. If your family dies, you probably will be able to get time and space to grieve. When your friend dies, you don't really get that, even though you may be equally heartbroken.

There was also an interesting discussion on how technology affects friendships. I thought the point that “social media is stimulating, but that too much stimulation can overload our brains and eventually feed into insomnia, anxiety, or depression.” As someone who only fully entered the internet world in my teens, figuring out the balance between connecting with friends and feeling left-out from all the social media updates is tricky. I can't say that I'm there now, but I'm slowly finding my way there – so far, I've realised that social networks are stressors, but blogs and chats help me to connect without stressing out.

The book sometimes reads like a summary of other books and anecdotes, but since I haven't read much about the research into friendships, most of the information was new to me. But if you've already read a few books, you may find some repeated content. Personally, I'd be interested in picking up a few of the books mentioned here to find out more about their specific topics.

This review was first posted at Eustea Reads

Karen says

While this book doesn't reveal anything groundbreaking, it did trigger me to consider the friendships I have now and those I've had in the past and the impact they've had on my life. I've always leaned toward a smaller group of friends as I tend to get a little overwhelmed in larger groups and end up quietly sitting back while more extroverted folks stand at center stage.

I found it interesting when she discussed friendships at work and productivity. I work remotely, and contrary to her opinion that having friends at work increases productivity, I feel much more productive working alone without the distraction/interruption. I love that I have more choice in the people I spend large amounts of time with now, though I do have friendships started while working together that have persisted through the years while our careers have taken us in different directions and locales.

I think the most interesting portion of the book dealt with social media and how technology supports or hampers relationships now. Yes, there can be a dark side. Being distracted by our phones/tablets can be a barrier to deep conversation. The anonymity of online mediums can breed negativity and bullying. We always have a choice who we associate with digitally and can make the effort to disconnect when in the presence of our friends. If someone's social media feed isn't adding to my life in some way, I'm not afraid to unfollow/unfriend them and I try to not let my phone distract me from the physical presence of friends. Social media has made it possible to meet and build friendships with people I never would have had the

opportunity to meet in the past and for that, I'm grateful for the technological advances of the current age. It's all in how we use the tools available to us.

Anna says

I found the first half of *Friendfluence* a bit dry because the information wasn't new to me. I already knew most of it intuitively and from experience. It was interesting, but I wasn't learning anything that I thought was "surprising" (as the subtitle suggests). I did love that it was a well-researched compilation of study findings (235 resources!).

I found the second half of the book more engaging, specifically in the chapters about the perks of friendship and how technology affects friendship. Reading the research findings from social networking studies made me wish I had stuck with studying sociology in college. (Where was that friendfluence when I needed it?)

You can't read *Friendfluence* without reflecting on the friendships from your life, and I was happy to recall how my life has been blessed by many wonderful friends.

Jennifer says

I've always attributed a rather large significance to friendships and how they have influenced my life. I feel that this book has strengthened this seemingly personal truth and made it universal. I always knew that emotionally and psychologically I've been challenged and made better by all of my friends...now I know that physically they play a role as well. It's not surprising but it's like a belief that you know you know but was forgotten and then remembered and thus believed more deeply the second or thirtieth time around. My friends are my soul pieces. They are significant. This summer I will be friends with my bestest friend for longer than we weren't friends. This makes my heart smile. <3 friends!

Leo Ostapiv says

We just discussed "Friendfluence" at San Francisco Non Fiction book club.

I had no clear opinion about rating before the meeting (3 or 4 stars), so I now I am feel confident about 3.

Good:

- The main benefit you get from the book is that it makes you think about your friends, how important there are and how much time you spend with them
- I overall enjoyed chapter on modern technology and liked the idea "It's wrong to ask what social media are doing to us. Social media is us. We create them". Of course there are some deviations, but most people use Technology for a purpose they always had: communicate with friends. Also it's true that social media make friendships more persistent (easier to keep friends despite years and distance) and pervasive (24 hour a day connection)
- Good point about happiness: when your friend is happy, you are more likely to feel happier. I've never thought about it in that way, but it's true in my life

Could be improved:

- It's not the mind changing book, no new or revolutionary ideas
- The writing style is hard to digest for general reader, it tastes like science magazine most of the time
- Some ideas about friends and family comparisons are unclear
- The last sentence of book's conclusion "I don't care too much if my son is smart or strong or handsome; I just want him to be friendly". The statement itself is controversial. Moreover in my view, it does not reflect the idea of the book. It's not about what is better to have "money, health or friends".

Conclusion:

Good read to think about friendships and find some motivation to spend more time and energy on building great friendships.

Ariana says

I've recently become very interested in friendships of all kinds and how individuals form, maintain and end these relationships across time, so this book jumped out to me at my local library. In short, Friendfluence is a straightforward pop psychology read about how our friendships are often some of the most important relationships we're capable of having. While I didn't find myself very captivated by the book, I did enjoy learning more about what social science researchers know about friendship through a fair amount of interesting tidbits and stories. I also appreciated that Flora mostly pushed against the typical "use-one-study-to-make-broad-claims" method, especially in regards to (view spoiler). An okay read for anyone mildly interested in the topic. I recommend focusing on the biggest takeaways found in the last chapter of the novel.

April says

excellent book, I never truly thought about my friendships until i read this book. I have several good friends that i have had for numerous years and never truly thought about how they came along or developed throughout the years. This book has given me a different way to look at these friendships and the ones i am sure are to come. It has also allowed me to look at myself and ask how i can do things differently in the future with my current friendships and those I want to gain later. This book gave me that WOW moment about many things...I won this book on goodreads but would recommend it to anyone!!!

Teena in Toronto says

We moved a lot (for no good reason!) when I was a kid. By the time I got to grade ten, I'd been in eight schools (four different schools just in grade eight!). I never had any problem making friends but I must say it was hard going to a new school and making new friends just to leave them and have to do the same thing over and over. I would be penpals with the friends I left behind but we would eventually lose touch. I don't

have the luxury that Gord has in having three friends (Kevin, Craig and Alfred) for 50+ years.

This book delves into friendships ... the topics covered are:

- * What is friendship?
- * Finding and making friends
- * Friendship in childhood
- * Friendship in adolescence
- * The perks of friendship
- * The dark side of friendship
- * How technology affects friendships
- * Making the most of Friendfluence

There are lots of stats and surveys discussed in this book which were quite enlightening. For example, did you know that 50% of the friends you have today will be out of your life within seven years?

I'd recommend this book. It made me appreciate the friends I have even more :)

Blog review post: <http://www.teenaintoronto.com/2013/01...>

Gina says

I've always believed that the key relationships in my life has always been friendships. But sharing this belief with others over the years proven to be a challenge that I was beginning to think of myself as an oddball or wanting too much from my friends. This book proves otherwise and it's great to know someone out there agrees with me.

Bookish says

Some fascinating facts and a few surprises here. For example, "One survey found that 18-24 year olds are nearly four times as likely as people over 55 to have a best friend of the opposite sex. In contrast, in a study that explored the role of best friends in the lives of married couples (an older cohort) not a single person among the 654 participants declared that they had someone of the opposite sex as a close friend." However, this book is limited by typical constraints of the pop psych genre, including big generalizations that are based on small, homogeneous samples; an overly colloquial writing style that carries a lot of unexamined class, race and cultural biases; and the fashionable but unproven social Darwinist thesis that the urge to procreate drives our lives.

Kater Cheek says

Since I haven't read other books (that I can remember) specifically dealing with friends and friendship before, I expected this book to really blow me away. Friends are a huge influence in our lives, almost as great as families, and greater for certain age groups.

Best things about this book are that it deals with a subject I haven't read other books about. The writing didn't get in the way, thoughts seemed to flow smoothly from one chapter to another. The book is easy to read, and that is not a criticism. Also, I adore the cover art.

Worst thing about this book is that I really don't feel like I learned anything. Nor was I enormously entertained by fascinating anecdotes or examples. I love reading non fiction because I love talking about it to other people later. Friendfluence doesn't seem to have deep enough research. It felt more like a stretched-out magazine article than a book about social science. The title misleads. Nothing surprised me, and I don't feel as though I learned more about how friends make us who we are. In fact, there was only one page, page 217, that started to go into something that I hadn't thought about before, the 8 different types of friends "Connectors", "Energizers" etc. that made me sit up and feel engaged. But that was just one paragraph. Turns out it's a synopsis of another book by Tom Rath. Maybe I should read his book instead.

There's nothing objectionable about this book, it's just not that informative.

Brooke Evans says

I really appreciated the way this book validated the importance of friendship and its place in our lives. The author makes the point that since friendships aren't legal, formalized relationships in our society, they don't carry the same status of a parent/spouse/etc. relationship, so we don't really think to credit them with the level of influence they actually have on us. She talks about ways friendships (with some of the unique traits they carry, different from other relationships in our lives) affect us in different ways at all ages, cites lots of studies and gives illustrative anecdotes, and I found the information both interesting and useful. I place a lot of importance on friendships in my life and haven't really seen a book like this before, so it was an enjoyable read.

Tammy-&-Michelle says

Friendfluence investigates the types of friends people have and how these friends have influenced different types of behaviors. The novel looks at the development of friendships, male and female, over many years. From adolescence to adulthood, friends or lack thereof can provide significant influence. The onset of social media is examined and how this "instant contact" has altered the "face to face" friendships of the past. You may agree or disagree with the findings in the book, but I think you will find it is very captivating and filled with *aha!* moments.

Two of the most profound ideas that she discusses is how two people destined for different things can become disastrous if they become friends. This is highlighted in many shows such as *Wicked Attraction* on the ID Channel. The other is that those the student who move constantly have a harder time retaining friends. I did find as a military brat that it was harder to keep friends because I was constantly changing schools as were those peers of mine. I could be at a school for 6 months and then have to move to another. It did make it harder; however I find that I developed a strength to adapt to change better than those that didn't.

I disagree with her statement "while friendships among people of different races are statistically rare in the United States, having such a friend lowers your levels of prejudice and even those of your friends." As a military brat I always had interracial friends so I knew my perception could be inaccurate. I do however have five girls ranging in age from 13 – 23 and many of their friends I have "adopted." I asked them this question and was told they didn't believe this to be true. Yet, I think this shows the evolution of friends over the years.

One of my favorite comments from the book is: “If you are not willing to be bored sometimes, you can’t have friends.” I know we have all listened to a friend drone on about something we could care less about (we have done it ourselves as well...admit it). But we do it because the other person needs to *vent* and that’s what friends are for. We listen, we agree, we disagree, but in the end we are there for each other. Even with the disagreement I found the book interesting because it made me think about the friendships we had and how they have changed over time. Ms. Flora use of surveys, studies, and interviews reinforced her points that friends influence our lives and can push us to do better. We found it to be an intriguing dissection of something I wouldn’t normally have thought about.

Jen says

Everyone should read this book (or one like it) in order to better understand and utilize the relationships that make up such a huge part of our lives. This made me appreciate the friendships I have gained in my life and feel better about the ones that I have lost.

This book also attends to the loneliness that exists in all of us and how friends help us break through our depressions and push us to be good people.

Pages 134-135: "Surrounding yourself with friends who hold you to a high standard and expect a lot from you might just be the best way to move ahead in life, whether you're starting from rock-bottom...or you want to achieve something spectacular and take your talents and abilities as far as they can go."

For parents and educators, the book provides useful information on the function and importance of childhood friendships, particularly online, as well as raising kids to be good friends.

I highly recommend this book!
