

# Faculty and Employee Assistance Program NEWSLETTER

## Developing Friendship Creates Benefits in our Personal and Professional Life

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### True or False:

1. Friends boost well-being.
2. You will feel healthier if you improve your bonds of friendship.
3. The energy shared between people makes for great relationships.
4. Friendships are good for business.
5. A close friendship in the workplace is a bad thing.

*The answer to statements 1- 4 are TRUE. The answer to statement number five is FALSE.*

According to Tom Rath, author of *Vital Friends: The People You Can't Afford to Live Without*, "friendships are among the most fundamental of human needs". "The energy between two people is what creates great marriages, families, teams and organizations."

Healthy friendships can be developed but, first you must know what role your friends play in your life and you play in theirs. Unfortunately, many people have forgotten the importance of friendship, both in their personal lives and in the workplace. There is much value to having both.



### Friends and the Role They Play in Your Life Can Often be Categorized:

**Builders** are friends who motivate you, invest in your development, and truly want you to succeed – even if it means they will go out on a limb for you. These friends help you see your strengths and advise you on how best to use them. They are generous with their time and encourage you to accomplish more. They will never compete with you and will always be standing at the finish line to cheer you on.

**Champions** stand up for you and your beliefs and they praise you to everyone else they know. They are the friends who 'have your back' and will advocate for you when you are not around to defend yourself. Champions are your strongest supports who thrive on your accomplishments and happiness.

**Collaborators** are friends with similar interests, those who share your passion for sports, hobbies, religion, work, politics, food, movies, music, or books. Shared interests are what often make Collaborators lifelong friends and those with whom you are most likely to spend your time.

**Companions** are always there for you, whatever the circumstances. You share a bond that is virtually unbreakable and when something big happens in your life, good or bad, this is the person you call first. These friends are always giving you meaningful gifts and they will sacrifice for your benefit.

**Connectors** are the bridge builders who help you get what you want. These friends get to know you and then work to connect you with others who will share your interests or goals. They extend your network dramatically and give you access to new resources. If you need a job, a doctor, a friend, or a date, call a Connector.

**Energizers** are fun friends who are always there to boost your spirits and create more positive moments in your life. They pick you up when you are down and can turn a good day into an even better one. Energizers are those to call on when you need a laugh, a smile, or a bit of relaxation in your day.

**Mind Openers** are the friends who stretch your viewpoint, introduce you to new ideas, opportunities, cultures and people. They help you to expand your vision and create positive change in your life. These are the friends who challenge conventional wisdom and come up with creative solutions to whatever problems or obstacles you face. They are stimulating and motivating and allow you to express opinions that you might be uncomfortable articulating to others.

**Navigators** are friends who give advice and direction. You seek them out when you need guidance and counsel – they are great at talking through your opinions. Navigators are best at hearing your dreams and goals and then helping you find the path to achieve them.

Author of the book, *The Friendship Crisis*, Marla Paul, projects that by 2010, 31 million Americans will live alone. That being said, and knowing that we generally spend more time in the workplace, it would seem that a number of friendships develop at work. The Gallup Organization completed landmark research on the impact of workplace friendships which concluded, in part:

- When employees have close friendships with the boss, they are more than twice as likely to be satisfied with their jobs.
- Overall research shows that the quality of the friendships in your life are the best predictors of daily happiness and life satisfaction, and have profound implication for your physical health and longevity.
- People with at least three close friends at work were 46% more likely to be extremely satisfied with their job and 88% more likely to be satisfied with their life.
- People who have a ‘best friend’ at work are *SEVEN* times more likely to be engaged in their work. They get more accomplished in less time. They also have fewer accidents, more engaged customers, and are more likely to innovate and share new ideas.
- Only 30% of the employees who reported said they have a best friend at work; but the research showed that close friendships at work boosts employee satisfaction by almost 50% and, doubles the chance that workers will have a favorable perception of their pay.

### **What Does This Mean for us as Individuals and Members of an Organization?**

It may mean that it is time to take stock of you as a friend. Has your personal and professional development included improving your relationships with others? Do you show outgoing concern for and patience with others? Are your friendships healthy? Do great friendships have anything in common?

### **Possibilities for Change**

Look to the friendships you do have – you probably already have friends who fulfill several positive roles in your life. Invest in those relationships by substituting solo, ‘me’ time for ‘we’ time.



Seek new friends – take a class in an area that interests you. Act approachable at work. Expand your social network by coordinating a ‘meet my friends’ networking event.

If married or partnered – create a vital friendship with your mate. Friendship within marriage accounts for more than 70% of overall marriage satisfaction.

Have the right expectation of your friends. If your expectation of a friend is in line with what they contribute to your relationship, the friendship is poised to thrive and make both of you better off in the process.

***The Faculty and Employee Assistance Consultants are available to you if you would like to further explore relationship challenges and/or other personal issues. Please feel comfortable to call (434.243.2643) or email ([dds4e@virginia.edu](mailto:dds4e@virginia.edu)) to request a session.***

#### References:

- Vital Friends: The People You Can’t Afford to Live Without, by Tom Rath, publication August, 2006, The Gallup Press.
- Sign-On San Diego.com The San Diego Union-Tribune, Friendships among women vital, and for many, importance grows., Cynthia Hubert, March 2006.
- People With Pals at Work More Satisfied, Productive, USA Today, Kerry Hannon, August, 2006

“Let friendship ring. It might look like idle chatter, but when employees find friends at work, they feel connected to their jobs. Having a best friend at work is a strong predictor for being a happy and productive employee.”  
- TIME Magazine