Friends - The Good, the Fad and the Ugly

The Connection Connoisseur episode 4

When it comes to friends, there are some distinct relationship types that should be noted. Because we are discussing what it means to be a friend and have meaningful friendships, it is important to know what you want yet also be able to identify what you do not want.

The following will distinguish and acknowledge the Good, the Fad and the Ugly when it comes to friends that become relationships. After identifying the friends that you should approach with discretion, we will focus heavily on “the Good” because as the law of attraction dictates what you focus on expands. Near the end I will share with you five essential food groups of friendship.

Let’s start by getting clear on what a friend is and what it is not.

*Frenemies - A wolf in sheep’s clothing - The Bad!*

"Frenemy" is an oxymoron and a blend of the words "friend" and "enemy" that refers to "a person with whom one is friendly, despite a fundamental dislike or rivalry" or "a person who combines the characteristics of a friend and an enemy". This definition is straight from Wikipedia and validates the sad fact of the term’s existence. Urban dictionary describes it a bit differently and in two ways.

1. A person in your life (usually a friend of friend or a coworker) that you get along with and overall you enjoy their company, but will cut you down with virtually any opportunity with mostly backhanded compliments or jabs.

2. One who always roots for you to do good just as long as you aren’t doing better then them

3. One who’s perception normally stems from some jealousy to any or all aspects of your life (similar to a hater but you get along with them).

4. Someone who acts as your friend while having ulterior motives.

Winston Churchill is credited with first coining this term while discussing America's involvement in WW2. When I think of frenemies, I think of someone who is sweet and friendly to my face yet does not really care about me at all other than what I can do for her. This person is a gossip behind your back and if you pay attention, probably sharing *with you* some unflattering things about other mutual friends. You can turn up your radar and identify frenemies before too much harm is done. Here are a few signs that your friend is really a frenemy.

1. They devalue your achievement and celebrate your setbacks. The only way they feel good about themselves is to make others feel less than. They are jealous of your victories. They may offer lop-sided compliments like “Wow, you finally did it”, or “Boy, you sure are lucky.” When you fail, it makes them feel good by comparison.

2. Frenemies love gossiping. They love talking behind your back and they are more than happy to share with you any unkind things that have been said about you.

3. Enquiring minds want to know. Frenemies will ask you lots of questions, not because they care about you but rather to stock up ammunition for her next gossip session. A real friend would listen, offer good advice and honestly tell you if she thought you were making a mistake. A frenemy’s advice will be self-serving and she will certainly allow you to make that mistake so that she feels better about herself.

4. She will playfully contribute passive-aggressive remarks or actions. Playing it off as if she is joking, she may underhandedly compliment someone else, your opponent, to take a jab at you. A frenemy’s compliments may be backhanded; “Your hair looks so much better now than that bleach blonde you used to have.” They may also keep pertinent information from you or share misinformation to sabotage you.

If you discover you have a frenemy in the midst, some would suggest mirroring their behavior and giving it right back to them. As tempting as this sweet revenge can be, energetically speaking, it will not be in your best interest to do so. As you progress through life, undoubtedly some frenemies will take notice. The more successful you become, the more you will attract envy and resentment from these individuals.

My best advice is to graciously distance yourself from these individuals. By making yourself unavailable to them, they will have less and less ammunition and eventually get bored with you and find another target. You may be unable to do this because they may be a co-worker or even worse, a family member. In this case, be aware of who they really are behind the deceptively friendly surface, and don’t engage more than is required.

It makes me feel icky even to talk about frenemies. I believe as the years go by, we experience these individuals less often. Perhaps they are maturing and learning to be better, outgrowing their unkind ways. The good news is that people are mostly good. Make a habit of paying attention to how people make you feel. Often your feelings will sense the truth and you will discover those who are insincere. Also, your true friendships will not tolerate the frenemy’s direct or indirect attacks on you or the Tribe.

*Friendlies*

This is a word I made up. I strongly believe in this word as it was created to describe a specific kind of relationship I have had over the years. Have you ever invested in a relationship to the extent that it is important and meaningful to you, however, you discover one day that “she’s just not that in-to-you” so to speak? Well if you have, you have been a victim of the ‘friendlies’. I understand that it can be disappointing and even painful to learn.

In many situations, these relationships come about when you are connected by a period of time, an event, or some other communal interest. When I first went to college, I started hanging out with several girls in my dorm. I was connecting and having fun with these new people. At about the same time, I met my first love interest in softball PE class. After a few months of flirting and hanging out we officially started dating. It was at this time that I started spending more time with the boyfriend and had less time to hang out with the new friends I had made. I remember one friend in particular, who had assumed a “motherly” demeanor in the dorm, said to me that she was concerned that I was spending too much time with this guy. Well, young love will not be hindered by the jealous whims of a few caddy “friendlies”. She wasn’t looking out for me, but rather looking out for herself. Borderline frenemy behavior, however, the distinction is that they didn’t in any way want to harm me, they just wanted my undivided attention.

Another personal example is when I was a young mother connecting with other mothers through school activities for our children. In a sense, I was trying to fit in at a new school. I was eager to build friendships and I invested a lot of time, energy, and care into the kids, the school, and these new *friends*. We socialized, attended all the kids sporting events together, and even traveled together. I was going in deep, but they had a different agenda. They were predominantly in it for convenience, not connection. After a few years I finally figured it out. I was dismayed and hurt to recognize that they really didn’t care to grow our friendship beyond scheduling kid’s playdates, class projects, and game time chit-chat.

The *friendlies* are a FAD of sorts in relationships. A FAD is defined as “a practice or interest followed for a time with exaggerated zeal”, Looking back, I take responsibility for not recognizing the signs, or lack thereof, that these friends weren't evolving into friendship. They were at different places in their own lives, and friendship wasn’t on the program. For a friend to become a friendship, there must be reciprocity. If you find yourself investing considerably more than another, recognize that your intentions don’t line up and move along. This may feel a bit like rejection, but it really isn’t. As Don Miguel Ruiz states in his important book, “The Four Agreements”:

‘Don’t take anything personally.

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say

and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream.

When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others,

you won’t be the victim of needless suffering.’

*Friendships - the Good!*

Kyler Shumway, author of “The Friendship Formula” suggests that there are five essential food groups of friendship.

1. Companionship - People enjoy each other's company and even feel less awkward entering social situations when they are with someone.

2. Fun - Shared interests and activities add to the positivity bank account and create fun memories. Enjoying a good laugh or an exhilarating experience together is priceless.

3. Empathy - Isn’t it nice to be able to confide in someone and feel like you are heard and really seen? Empathy is the greatest of all human superpowers.

4. Assistance - Sometimes you just need a ride to the airport. Maybe you need a hand moving something or you need help with a computer problem. Friendships can lend a hand when you are in a bind.

5. Learning - We all have special gifts and areas of expertise that can benefit others. Sharing these gifts with each other is rewarding as we can sharpen our own skills while teaching our friends something that will help them be successful. We can also learn together through life experience. You can support each other, work through obstacles together, and learn as you go.

Now that you know the Good, the Fad and the Ugly relationships, focus on the Good - give them *all* of your attention! Some of you already know the security blanket of love and acceptance from one or more solid friendship. Some of you may need some help making this happen. In the weeks ahead we are going to break down each component of Tribal friendships. You will learn how to attract, build, and fortify your Tribe. One day soon, you will experience the joy and fulfillment of a Tribe that contributes to your own personal wholeness.

Thank you for joining me today. See you next week!

When three or more gather, we are Tribe.

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