**20 Ways to Be a Better Friend**

When you have been close to a friend for years, it’s easier to identify when a storm is brewing or something is wrong. Understanding your friend’s past and present situations as well as emotions can help you both be better friends.

1. Be more sensitive to your friend’s needs. Learn to identify the non-verbal cues your friend displays. This helps you be ready to take action when needed.

1. Make your friend a top priority. Turn off your cell phone and other distractions, especially when you are together. You may need to do the same for phone calls.

1. Be there even when you’d rather not. If your friend feels that he/she is a bother to you, you’ve just added to the problem. Think about how you would feel if it was you or one of your children who needed something. Be there for your friend as much as possible.
2. Make special time to do things with your friends, individually and in a group. The more time you spend together, the better and more meaningful the relationship will be.

1. Talk (not text) at least 3 times a week, even if it’s just for 10-15 minutes. Hearing a voice, you know and trust, can make a world of difference in everyone’s outlook.

1. Go on a vacation or to an event together. It gives you something to smile and laugh about that only the two of you really understand.

1. Make outdoor activities a preferred activity, whether it’s walking around the block, tending to each others garden, building a she-shed or man-cave, or play tennis.

1. Get creative. Join and complete a class together.

1. Be more honest with your friend. Practice speaking the truth in a way that doesn’t hurt your friend but shows them that you care enough to bring it to their attention.

1. Select one or two times a month to meet for a “friend’s night out,” with dinner.

1. Volunteer to help your friend participate in special church or community causes.

1. Cook and deliver a meal to your friend (and their family.) This can be done alternating each month so you can each get a break. This is also great during a time when your friend is especially stressed.

1. Don’t keep score or judge. Friendship isn’t a contest of who does more. It’s a partnership where everyone does what they can to help the other. Things will never be equal so don’t even bother to measure. It will only hurt the relationship.

1. Even friends need to know when to keep their opinions to themselves. Know where the line is with your friend and don’t step over it, unless specifically asked.

1. Little thoughtful things can show how much you care. Give unexpected gifts and perform unexpected tasks, randomly.
2. Take your friend up on an invitation to go somewhere, even if you feel uncomfortable or out of your element. You will both have each other to lean on and your friend will see how much he/she matters to you.

1. Send a sweet or thoughtful text (message) when your friend is unexpectedly on your mind. No need to explain; just say “you are on my mind.” They may know something that you don’t, at that moment. Close friends can sometimes sense things without being told.

1. Offer to babysit, pet-sit, or grandma-sit to give your friend more self-time or time with their partner.

1. Be supportive of your friend’s dreams and goals. Keep negative thoughts to yourself unless asked. Your job is to give them confidence and helpful ideas. You are their biggest fan and cheerleader.

1. Be empathetic without coddling or babying your friend. Help your friend stand tall and confident during the tough times.