

FRIENDSHIP: THE MEDICINE OF LIFE

By Mary Claybon

“The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing...not healing, not curing...that is a friend who cares.”

- *Henri Nouwen*

Friendship is an art. We are born into families but we must cultivate our friends. A true friend is priceless- someone you can call when you are confused, have a problem, or when you are excited and want to celebrate. Sometimes we need a friend to listen and not fix our problems or advise us with the best solution. Yet, how many people have someone in their life who will listen and love unconditionally without an ulterior motive; without asking for anything in return; someone whose own spirit is lifted by allowing you to share your dreams, worries, fears, confusion, anger, and other emotions.

This is rare in today’s society, because we are in a hurry and listening takes time. Like doctors, we want to give our friend a solution. Often we don’t want a solution; we just want to talk it out. A true healer will listen until they don’t exist so the other person can come up with their own solution, but this takes time.

Recently I went to the doctor and I said to him, “You know, Doctor, I think there is an emotional component to this and I really want to heal at a deeper level.” He looked at me with a sense of helplessness, and said “Well, get up on the table and let me listen to your heart.” After putting the cold stethoscope on my chest, he proclaimed, “You are just fine.” Isn’t that funny? Would he really take the time to listen to my heart and soul and mind? No, not because he doesn’t want to, but because he doesn’t have time. Listening to someone’s feelings and emotions is difficult. We quickly want to solve the problem, hurry away the pain, and heal the person. We can’t expect our doctors to be our friends, but if we had more friends we might not need as many doctors.

You may have a “ton of friends,” but how many of your friendships are open and unreserved allowing you both to expose your soul and unleash your feelings and emotions without fear. You are fortunate if among the multitudes of people you know, you have one or two trusting friends who will be there for you even when they don’t understand you.

Cultivating friendship takes time and thought and the ability to give and to forgive. It is the desire to want to be in a relationship with another human being for no other reason than the healing energy of knowing you can count on that person and they can count on you in life when it is challenging or when it is exciting. This kind of friendship is the best medicine.