

3 Ways to Kill Friendship

I've spent a good deal of time pondering friendships and their variable dynamics. I love my alone time, but I am deeply relational, and when I am with my friends, my people, my tribe, I am not content with superficial chit chat. I desire to go deep.

I love nothing more in conversation than that moment when a mask lifts, when each party tentatively stretches out their emotional feelers, gauging if it's yet safe to be vulnerable. It's an uncomfortable and often awkward time, but one, when respected, honored and cherished, reaps the great reward of intimacy, of realness. Oh how our generation is crying out for something real, organic, authentic!

During my perhaps obsessive pondering and over-analyzing of friendships, I've tried to pinpoint just three patterns of thinking that, if allowed to roam free through one's mind, will poison the atmosphere and do great damage to friendships, if not destroy them completely.

I write from a personal perspective, acutely aware that we are all unique in our thinking. Therefore, these may not resonate with you at all, and that's totally OK.

It's here that I also feel the need to warn you, sincerely warn you, that the cultivation of good friendships hurts. A lot.

Self-reflection and honest self-assessment hurt. A lot.

It is a painful process.

Thinking reflectively means that the images reflected back at you may not always capture you in the best light.

It's akin to flipping through an old photo album, there's cringe-worthy moments a-plenty. Cue groaning.

But as good ol' Dr Phil says: "You can't change what you don't acknowledge." Yep, I did actually just quote Dr Phil. (See, cringe-worthy!)

Acknowledgement is the first step to change.

1. EXPECTATION

I grew up as an only child, the only child to parents who were each also only children. This meant that I didn't grow up with siblings, uncles, aunts or cousins. My close relationship bonds were those formed through friendships.

Because I looked to friends to fulfill all my social needs, I would often attach too quickly, too strongly to those around me. Add to that, a nice little fear cocktail of rejection and abandonment and you're looking at one clingy, co-dependent gal! I still have the tendency, when left unchecked, to attach in this way. I can be "intense." (Y'all are all just gonna be banging down my door, begging for my friendship now, huh?)

And because I attach so strongly, I expect others to attach in this way also.

I find myself expecting that others will treat me the way I treat them, which sounds totally reasonable, right? Maybe not.

Again, brutally honest self-assessment is required here.

I expect that others will prioritize me and the time spent with me, in the exact way that I prioritize for them.

I expect this because extended family hasn't been a huge part of my life or taken up a role of great importance in it, that extended family will also not be greatly important to others.

I am prone to letting my experience of extended family jade my perception of what it could look like for others.

I often expect that because I've poured out my heart and soul,

opening all my closets to reveal all my skeletons, that others will do the same.

Yes, I'm aware that my particular expectations are a little more unhealthy and bordering (okay, perhaps fully crossed over) the line of extreme. But we all have them. We all have a mini list of relational expectations whether we're aware of them or not.

Face them, explore their possible implications. Critique them, and approach them from different angles.

Sometimes the biggest mistakes stem from the best of intentions.

2. ASSUMPTION

I have an initiative ability to "read between" conversational lines. I am often perceptive to the unknowingly hidden or deliberately covered emotions in others. I can often "see" (spiritually) what's going on behind the words that are being spoken and the facade that's being put forward. This, however, becomes dangerously murky territory when I stop relying on the Holy Spirit to prompt me and give **His** revelation for **His** purposes in the lives of others, and instead start "head"-analyzing everything that could be going on in the heart of my friends.

We make assumptions all the time. Some of them, we convince ourselves, are just us being helpful, sensitive and mindful of the demands we place on the time of our friends.

"Oh, I assume they're just busy with work. ... I don't want to bother them. ... They'll come to me when they're ready."

We assume people need space, And they very well may.

But why not ask?

Communication, *real* communication where we can pocket our ego,

is key to healthy, flourishing friendships.

Our most dangerous assumption occurs when we choose to guess what is going on in the mind and heart of someone else, when we assume how they feel toward us, or *when we assign our own perceptions to their intentions.*

Those of us who are prone to false guilt and carrying condemnation and shame will always assume that we've somehow done something wrong and the other person is now angry at us. It seems to be the default mode of the wounded soul.

Own what is legitimately yours to own, and take on nothing else! If you've been terrible with keeping in touch and it's something you regret, own it. Don't excuse it.

Apologize, make a deliberate effort to improve in this area, and then move forward.

But if you know, deep in your heart that you have done all that you can to contribute to a healthy friendship, then ditch the guilt and open the lines of communication.

3. PRIDE

Seasons change, people change.

Sometimes friendships end sometimes friendships need to end, in order for personal growth to occur.

Possessing the wisdom to know when to walk away, is invaluable. But let it never be motivated by pride.

Out of all the damaging behaviors and patterns of thinking that can occur within the dynamics of friendship, pride is the ultimate assassin.

Pride is the ultimate liar.

Pride seeks not to repair, but to cover over.

Pride murders intimacy.

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