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# How Developing Adult Friendships with No Less Than Four Close Friends Can Save Your Life

DECEMBER 29, 2012 BY [LYNNE EVERATT](#) [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

During our teenage years, we spend roughly a third of our time developing and maintaining friendships. Once we reach adulthood, the percentage of friendship time drops to 10%.

Could this friendship decline be a factor in increased rates of depression as we age? According to psychologist Martin Seligman, a lack of social support means a loss of resources that can act as a buffer against setbacks and failures, both emotional and physical.

As important as you believe your friends are, you may be surprised to learn what research has uncovered about the power of developing the right friendships and how it can change and save your life. Believe it or not, friends help us live longer and happier, and the quality of our friendships is of far greater importance than the quantity. (Although there does seem to be a minimum number of friends required for good health—can you guess what it is?)

## How Developing Adult Friendships Will Have a Profound Effect on Your Physical Well-Being

People with close friends are less likely to catch a cold or suffer from cognitive decline, and heart patients who had less than four friends were more than twice as likely to die as those with four or more friends. Four good friends seem to be an optimal number.

Friends affect our health through their love and support, but they also affect our health through their example as we tend to mimic our friends best and worst habits, especially when it comes to diet, dress and exercise. If your friends eat healthy, you are five times more likely to have a healthy diet yourself.

## **A New Study That Shows How Friends Can Change Your Perceptions and Make Exercise Easier Than It Is**

A group of students at the University of Virginia were taken to the base of a steep hill and fitted with a weighted backpack. They were then asked to estimate the steepness of the hill. Students who stood with friends gave lower estimates of the steepness of the hill than students who stood alone. And the longer the friends had known each other, the less steep the hill appeared.

You see, without the right support, we automatically make everything look harder than it is – and we start to make excuses for why we cannot make the healthier choice in life.

When we mix with our friends we literally mix, becoming more like them through association. Therefore it is important to choose friends with care, ensuring that they support you and that you feel comfortable with their example.

### **What You Should Look For In Your Adult Friendships...**

1. To maximize the sum of your adult friendships, you should seek to have as many roles covered in your friendships as possible, which is why you need at least 4 close friends. These roles include a personal coach who helps his or her friends to succeed in achieving their goals, a matchmaker who connects friends, a hobbyist who shares a passion for some activity, an entertainer who livens up any friendly gathering, a sage that everyone comes to for advice and an innovator who loves introducing friends to new experiences.

2. Each friend should have something aspirational about them—a quality you admire and want to emulate. This way you can lead a happier, healthier and more successful life.

As Anais Nin put it, “Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive.” What worlds would you like to have born in you? Look to your adult friends for ways you can expand each other’s worlds and to the strangers who may become friends.