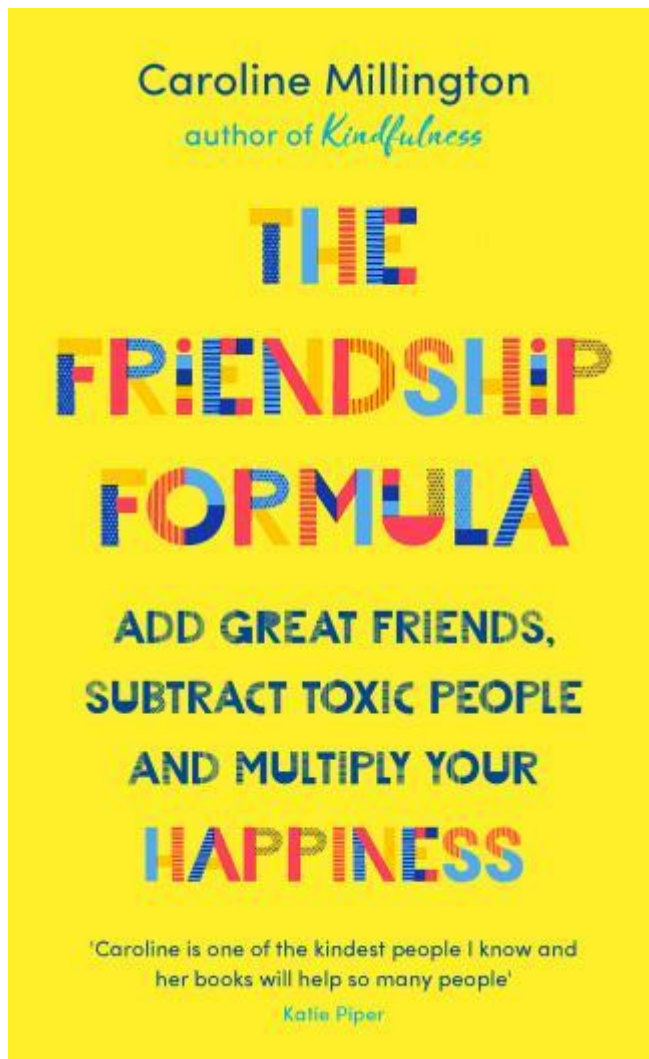


The Friendship Formula by Caroline Millington



Chapter 1: What is the Friendship Formula?

- What makes a best friend? How do you cut out toxic people from your life? Who are the people you should surround yourself with to make you happy? Friendship feels like it should be easy, but the reality can be very different. If life was a pie chart, work and sleep would carve out big triangles, leaving you with a finite number of hours for family and friends – and deciding who you spend your precious free time with can sometimes feel more complicated than long division.
- Ultimately, we deserve to surround ourselves with cheerleaders, with people who support us, believe in us and are there in the good times and the bad. I think people fall into two categories: drains and radiators – they either suck us of energy and emotion or radiate warmth and love.
- Friends are the family we choose for ourselves.
- The Friendship Formula celebrates the nurturing relationships we build together and helps us to cope when friendships break down.

- Just like Marie Kondo, the Japanese organizing consultant, has got us all going through our wardrobes, books and kitchen utensils (I mean, how many wooden spoons do we actually need?!), we should apply the same principles to our social circle.
- Take ten minutes now to think about which friends bring you joy – the ones you want to spend more time with; who’s lurking at the back of your closet, forgotten, and needs thanking for the lessons they’ve taught you before putting in your ‘no longer bring me joy’ pile?; and which mates need ‘waking up’?
- The Friendship Formula will help you look at the people around you, cherish the ones who bring you the most happiness, end those relationships which aren’t good for you, motivate you to be open to meeting new people, and show you that spending time alone should be celebrated, not feared.
- **Ten Friendship Formula rules**
- 1. Be the friend you wish to have.
- 2. Ditch toxic friends immediately and without hesitation.
- 3. Invest in the friendships that bring you the most joy and let others go with gratitude for the lessons they taught you.
- 4. Believe you deserve to be treated with respect and love by all your friends.
- 5. Recognize that falling in love and having children change friendships – but when you truly love a friend, you adapt and find the positives.
- 6. Accept that it’s OK to let a friendship go, guilt-free, if it’s run its course.
- 7. Love bomb your closest friends often and without reason.
- 8. Make the most of your work wives and husbands – they will make your work environment a happier place to be and can help develop your career.
- 9. Never hold onto a friendship out a sense of duty.
- 10. Learn to enjoy your own company and find the positives in spending time alone.

Chapter 2: Friendships; Making you happy and healthy

- Your closest friends should be the family you choose for yourself.
- How do we find friends?
- You’re going to meet a lot more people that you don’t end up being friends with than you do.
- When it comes to making friends, here a few ingredients...
- History
- Shared Interests
- Common Values
- Equality
- A commitment to your happiness
- Being a good influence
- **Friendship is good for your health**
- We all know how important friendship can be but it literally can be a lifesaver. In recent decades, there have been some groundbreaking studies into the importance

of friendship and the impact it can have on our lives – and the dangers a lack of bonds and connections can have too.

- When it comes to stress, ‘Men walk, women talk.’
- In one 2017 study in America, researchers found that lonely people had a 50 per cent increased risk of early death, and in another study, those who had the most friends over a nine-year period cut their risk of death by more than 60 per cent.
- According to a study at Harvard Medical School that started in 1976, the more friends people have, the less likely they were to develop physical impairments as they aged. They were also more likely to be leading a joyful life. Research has shown that people with a good friends often feel happier, less stressed and more like they belong than those without, and it’s unsurprising to find experts saying that having a strong network of friends also increases self-confidence.
- These researchers have also found that not having close friends or confidants is as detrimental to your health as smoking or carrying extra weight!
- Increasing your level of social connection can protect your future mental health.
- A 2010 review of 148 studies found that people who felt less socially connected had more risk of early death than those who smoked, drank or were obese.
- When a person’s level of social connection goes down, they experience worse mental health a year later.
- The influence of social connectedness on mental health over time was about three times stronger than the other way around – the more social someone was, the more improved their mental health. All the more reason to spend time with the friends who make you happiest.

Chapter 3: How to make friends

- When it comes to making new friends, keep an open mind and an open heart...
- How to attract true friends
- First rule: be the person you’d like to be friends with! You’ll attract the people who share the traits you find the most appealing. Pursue your passions. Spend time doing what you like and you’ll meet the right people for you along the way.
- Making friends as an adult can be hard. When we’re kids, it seems so easy. Our subconscious bias hasn’t fully developed, and as long as the other kid is willing to share, we’re friends whether it’s for two minutes in the park or for life. But finding new friends when you’re older can be trickier.
- Time spent together is everything.
- Two people need to share fifty hours’ worth of face time to turn from acquaintances to causal friends. After ninety hours spent together two people can become friends. They have to hit 200 hours together to qualify as close friends.
- You have to invest. It’s clear that many adults don’t feel they have a lot of time, but these relationships are not going to develop just by wanting them. You have to prioritize time with people.
- Maintaining close relationships is the most important work we do in our lives – most people on their deathbeds agree.

- As you get older, you'll probably find yourself with fewer close friends. A study in Finland in 2016 found that both men and women make more friends until the age of twenty-five. After that, the numbers begin to fall rapidly and continue to fall throughout the rest of our lives.
- **The elusive 'F Factor'**
- Proximity
- According to those clever social psychologists, the proximity theory accounts for our tendency to form relationships with those who are close by – which makes total sense when you think how many hours you have to spend with someone before they become a friend.
- While you may be able to maintain a long-distance friendship, it's hard to form a bond with anyone you don't have regular face-to-face time with.
- Shared activities
- Go online
- Life events

Thirteen Traits of Friendship

- There are thirteen traits of friendship that fall into three categories: integrity, caring and congeniality.
- Integrity is a core value cited as the bedrock of any relationship, and includes trustworthiness, honesty, dependability, loyalty and the ability to trust others.
- Caring – from empathy and listening to offering support and not being judgmental – is a key trait we look for in a friend.
- Friendship is about two people each bringing half a jigsaw puzzle to the table and fitting their pieces together to make the perfect picture.
- Auditions are open!
- As we get older, we get stuck in our ways and seek like-minded people to complement us.
- **Friendship rules**
- Never be embarrassed by your passions and hobbies.
- Put time and effort in.
- Ask yourself: who sees you when they have free time and who frees up their time to see you?
- Accept you're not a perfect friend.
- Don't make false promises.
- Accept that some people see you as an acquaintance when you'd like to be a friend.

Chapter 4: The Friendship Circle

- Your friendship circle can be impacted on by your lifestyle – a partner, children and other family members' needs can leave you with precious little time for friends.
- If you have a jug of time and people you care about holding out glasses waiting for you to fill them up, there's only so far your friendship supply is going to go. You choose wisely who to top up before refilling your jug and starting again the next day.

- Robin Dunbar from the University of Oxford claimed that we can only maintain up to 150 significant relationships at the same time. He states these 150 people are the number of people you know and keep in contact with. It doesn't include people you've been friends with in the past but no longer have a social relationship with, or people you know but have no particular relationship with.
- So, according to science, that's your limit: 150 people you may develop valued relationships with at any one time – but the depth of the friendship depends on which circle they are in.
- The importance of the relationship increases as the number of people and size of circles decreases to the core people in your life, right at the centre. It's up to us who goes where. The outer circle is old school friends, people you once worked with, distant relations and friends of friends – people you'd want to get to speak to if you saw them. They might be on your Christmas card list but you don't confide in them or rely on them for your emotional well-being.
- The next group of friends are the ones you're delighted to see at an event; you keep in touch at Christmas and maybe speak or get together a few times a year. There can be between thirty-five and fifty people in this circle.
- According to professor Dunbar, there are fifteen people in the next circle – the friends you see once a month or so, known as the 'sympathy circle'. You're close friends, you can confide in them about most things, enjoy their company and can rely on them for support. You'd miss them if they weren't in your life and you make an effort to see them regularly.
- Your smallest circle includes the friends you choose to see – or have some contact with – every week and are those you would turn to in a crisis. You invest more of your social time with these people than anyone else. These are your best friends and often include a family member or two, but there's a limit to how many close friends you can have in your inner clique at one time. According to one study, the average person manages just five close relationships at a time.
- Professor Dunbar says these close relationships are limited in number because we are only able to fully invest and build connections with up to five people. If you're in a committed relationship, that person takes two places in your inner circle, leaving you with just the three close friends alongside your partner.
- According to Professor Dunbar, these numbers and proportions remain remarkably stable over time because membership moves between the circles. If a close friendship comes to a natural end or the person moves away, we'll simply slide a new person into the slot. Think of it like the Hunger Games for friendship!

Juggling friends

- A 2016 study found that only half of perceived friendships are actually mutual! I hate to be the one to break it to you, but many of the people you consider friends only think of you as an acquaintance, and there are probably many people you have happily popped into your outer circle of friends who think of you as one of their closet! That's right, up to half of our friendships are actually unreciprocated!

- So, as you move people between your circles, be prepared to be moved in and out of other people's. I think sometimes it happens due to circumstance, and can be subconscious or very much deliberate.
- As you get older, your circles are likely to shrink.
- We spend our twenties in 'identity exploration' mode.
- In your thirties, and perhaps forties, it seems we're settling into our true selves, and it's the quality of our socializing rather than the quantity that has a positive effect on our lives.

Friendship later in life

- According to new research, friends become increasingly important to health and happiness as people age.
- In a separate study of 7,500 older people in the US, it is found that it wasn't just important to have friends – it was the quality of those friendships that was key. 'You have kept those people around because they have made you happy, or at least contributed to your well-being in some way,'
- Across our lives, we let the more superficial friendships fade, and we're left with the really influential ones.

Chapter 5: Best friends forever

- The recipe for friendship
- The following are must-haves for close friendships:
- Kindness
- Honesty
- Give and take
- Communication
- Shared humor
- Dependability
- Independence

Male bonding

- Forget sports chat over a pint, close heterosexual make friendships go way beyond superficial conversation and bravado.
- I believe men, in this century, enjoy authentic and deep friendships with their guy friends, and there's never been a more important time for this.
- Young men get more emotional satisfaction out of close heterosexual friendships than romantic relationships with women.
- The rise of the bromance is directly related to the diminishment of homophobia. It signals that young, straight men no longer desire to be trapped by older conservative notions of masculinity.

Chapter 6: Work friends and foes

- Friends at work are like a good bra: they perk you up, make you look good and always support you!

- Work friends are important to overall happiness.
- Remember, just because you get on well with someone, doesn't automatically make them a friend.
- Sometimes, you have to accept your place in the friendship circle the other person puts you in!

Chapter 7: Letting go of a friend

- It's over. Sometimes it fizzles out or disappears so slowly you barely notice; at other times there could be a major drama that sees a shock end. There's no way we can carry every friend we ever make through our lives with us.
- As new people come into our lives, something – or someone – has got to give. We make way for new friends, the ones who really do bring us joy, by letting go of others.
- Adulting often feels like a never-ending quest to please others.
- It can be painful to see friendships sacrificed, bonds broken, feeling discarded, but along the way you'll make new friends and invest in people you have more in common with.

Breaking up is hard to do

- Often friendships fade away because of a lack of balance. We all know that the best kind of friends reciprocate the time, energy and dedication we put in. When it feels off-kilter, it can really challenge your commitment.
- As our lives take different paths – careers, relationships, travel, children – friendships come under pressure, and it takes effort on both sides to continue. While we once had everything in common, changing lifestyles can dramatically impact on people's availability and means to do things together.
- The things that drew us together in the first place may no longer exist.
- That magic connection dissolves over time. Unlike marriage, we never exchange vows with our best friends. It's an unspoken promise to be in each other's lives – and we're not obligated to friends the same way we are to our partners or even family members.
- Friends are elastic and friends won't hold you back from falling in love, pursuing your career or travelling abroad. Best friends support each other in their life choices, even when it means you won't see as much of them anymore. Because best of friends – the ones whose hearts are truly connected – never lose their bond.
- Friendships ebb and fade with frequency.
- In a seven-year period most people had replaced half of their friends, with only 30 percent of close friends remaining so. Sometimes, however, friends drift apart, consciously or not.

Distance

- Friendships sometimes slip away from us so unexpectedly and quietly we don't even notice, and then when we do, it feels like too much time has passed to reach back

and grasp them by the hand. We're all guilty of maintaining a friendship for history's sake.

- Money does impact on friendships to some degree, and when planning time together it can play a huge factor.

Friendship fallout

- The average person has sixteen friends and acquaintances – but they don't actually like three of them! Which explains why they're let go from the friendship circle.
- The top fifteen reasons we don't like our own friends:
 - 1. Having nothing in common
 - 2. Being too bossy or controlling.
 - 3. A difference of opinions.
 - 4. How they behave when they've been drinking.
 - 5. Being too high maintenance.
 - 6. Leading different lifestyles.
 - 7. Use of language.
 - 8. They've let you down.
 - 9. Sense of humor.
 - 10. How they treat their partner.
 - 11. They've changed.
 - 12. Political affiliations.
 - 13. How they treat their children.
 - 14. Not liking the people they hang out with.
 - 15. Being blanked by them.
- Allow yourself to phase out a friendship if you no longer think you have anything in common.

How to deal with losing a friendship

- It's only natural to feel sad or upset, but accept that people come into our lives for a reason – sometimes to teach us something or introduce us to a new way of looking at life. The friendship may be over, but carry with you any life lessons you've picked up along the way.
- Accept that the friendship is over but allow yourself to look back at the good times and feel happy.
- It's important to remember, you might grow apart from a friend for a while, but sometimes life draws you back together again. If there's been no toxic breakup, I think it's a good idea to keep the door to friends open and let each other come and go as much as you both want.
- If you feel like you've neglected a friendship and it fizzled out because you didn't put enough effort in, don't be too embarrassed to get in touch. Send a card in the post saying, 'Saw this and thought of you' or a text. If you don't hear back, they've clearly moved on with their life, but you have nothing to lose.

Chapter 8: Toxic Fallout

- It's time to take an inventory of your own friendships. Negativity in friendships is unhealthy, and it's important to recognize the signs so you can either make changes or end the friendship for good.
- Conflict shouldn't be central to any relationship. If there are people in your life who regularly upset you, make you question your self-worth, put you down or try to control you, it's time to step away.
- Things to consider: You do NOT have to agree with your friend on everything.

Frenemies and signs of a toxic friendship

- It can start small. A little retort that throws you but is followed up with a smile, leaving you confused.
- The Urban Dictionary defined a frenemy as: 'A person in your life (usually friend or co-worker) who you get along with and whose overall company you enjoy but who will cut you down at virtually any opportunity with mostly backhanded compliments or jabs. Always roots for you to do good but just not better than them. Normally stems from some jealousy to any or all aspects of your life.' Sound familiar? Yep, me too.

Before you cut a friend out

- Before you make the decision to remove a toxic friend from your life, check in and make sure there's not something bigger going on which is causing them to act out in this way.
- You are not responsible for another adult.

How to deal with a toxic friend

- Limit your contact
- Let it go
- Ultimately, friendship is about communication in good times and bad.

Chapter 9: The death of a friend

- The death of a friend is rarely talked about. When a friend dies, it doesn't feel like you have the 'right' to grieve in the same way you can when a family member dies.
- Losing a friend without doubt is the most devastating thing that can happen in your life.
- Grief is a physical pain. It sucks the air out of your lungs, pokes pins in your heart and twists your guts tight. The unexpected death of a loved one is surreal.
- Grief is there to fill the void left after death. When you lose a friend, you go through the grieving process of shock, anger and heartbreak. A million emotions and nonsensical thoughts. The loss of your future friendships, of what might have been. The guilt of knowing your own grief cannot be compared to that of your friend's family. And yet, it's there.
- When a friend dies, a part of your heart dies too.
- It's not enough to be alive. You have to be living.
- The love we shared is worth the pain left behind.

- We deal with a tsunami of emotions after the death of someone we love – friend or relative. Grief is, as the famous quote goes, the price we pay for love.

Chapter 10: The Parent Trap

- There is one thing that I believe is 100 per cent guaranteed to change any friendship: parenthood.
- The blessing of a baby can create wonderful new bonds and also tear friendships apart.
- The one thing all mums and dads have in common is a severe lack of free time.
- People often feel cast aside when a friend falls in love and disappears to get to know their new partner.
- One University of Oxford study found that falling in love can cost you two close friends.
- If you don't see people, your emotional engagement with them drops off and does so quickly.
- The intimacy of a relationship – your emotional engagement with it – correlates very tightly with the frequency of your interactions with those individuals.
- Marriage can be the catalyst that ends even the closest of friendships.
- The largest drop-off in friends in the life course occurs when people get married.
- That's kind of ironic, because at the wedding people invite both of their sets of friends, so it's kind of this last wonderful and dramatic gathering of both people's friends, but then it drops off.

Changing nappies and changing friendships

- The crack that is created between friends when babies come along can become as wide as the Grand Canyon if you BOTH don't throw in some time and love.
- Priorities change. That's given. Becoming a parent is all-consuming, and friendships are the first thing to be shelved, to collect a fine layer of dust until mum – or dad – are ready to put their child down, pick up their friend, dust them off and try to re-establish the friendship.
- All relationships take work and compromise especially through periods of change.
- Sometimes relationships end; people change and friendships drift apart – and that's OK too. A friendship takes work and love on both sides and, if one party stops doing that, it may be time to move on.

Chapter 11: Just good friends?

- The age-old question: can men and women just be good friends?
- Friendship between men and women is a fairly recent phenomenon. For hundreds of years women only spent time with relatives, potential suitors and then their husband. The idea that straight men and women could be friends and nothing more was questionable until more recent decades.
- A 2012 study at the University of Wisconsin showed that it's impossible to escape from sexual tension. Scientists studied 88 opposite-sex friends couples and found that men were more physically and sexually attracted to their female friends than

the women were to the guys. The study found that these men were also more likely to overestimate how attracted their platonic female friends were to them, while the women underestimated how attractive they were to their male friends. Basically, the men assumed the women were secretly attracted to them and the women assumed the men weren't interested in them sexually.

- All friendship is based on a chemistry of sorts, so it's easy to see how this can develop into sexual attraction.

Chapter 12: Social media mates and meeting IRL

- Pokes. Likes. DMs. RTs. Shares. There's a whole other language on social media with a bunch of strangers who are online friends and potentially friends IRL (in real life) too.
- Digital platforms can be full of infighting and smoke and mirrors, projecting images of a perfect Insta life. An online life is not somewhere you should live but simply visit, while remembering it's somewhat of a wonderland.
- Social media has changed the way we interact with people. 'What Facebook does and why it's been so successful in so many ways is it allows you to keep track of people who would otherwise effectively disappear.
- Millennials have a wider network but their feelings of fulfilment from these interactions are heavily based on shallow connections and public perception.
- Lurking – reading posts on social media and watching what people are doing without engaging or posting yourself – isn't particularly good for your well-being or mental health. If you only spend time on social media to gather information about people's lives and compare them to your own, you're going to come away feeling bad about yourself.
- Facebook or Facebrag in the case of many people – only offers a glimpse into your friends' lives, while Instagram images are often heavily filtered.
- Research suggests that social media can lead people to think that their peers are doing better socially than they are.
- The digital world is seen as a benchmark to compare our lives with others, and often the fallout of that is a feeling of failure, envy and FOMO (fear of missing out).
- It's important to cherish those friends we have in our real lives and be fully present while in their company rather than distracted by social media.
- Keep an eye on how much time you spend on social media compared to time spent with your friends either in person or on the phone. If you realize you're online more, cut back and make more effort to catch up with your real friends – and enjoy that hug!
- Never forget how important meeting up with friends in real life can be for our well-being. There might be all the feels online but there are no hugs available on the internet.

Chapter 13: Loneliness and choosing to be alone

- There's big difference between being alone and feeling lonely.

- You can have a mobile phone full of numbers or be stood in the middle of a party and still feel lonely.
- While loneliness is often associated with the elderly, it's actually younger people who are more likely to feel lonely.
- Loneliness can increase the risk of early death by at least 30 per cent.