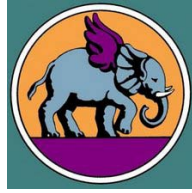


OVERLOOK PRESS



Reading Group Guide

Best Friends Forever

Surviving a Breakup with Your Best Friend

By Irene S. Levine, Ph.D.

*Female friendships have their ups and downs—most of them don't last forever—
but we are very fortunate when best friends are a constant in our lives.*

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The questions that follow are offered as possible topics for discussion. We hope they will enhance your reading of Irene S. Levine's *Best Friends Forever* and provoke reflection and lively discussion.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Men, jobs, children, personal crises, and irreconcilable social gaps—these are just a few of the strange and confusing reasons that may cause a female friendship to end. No matter the cause, the breakup leaves a woman devastated and asking herself difficult questions. Was someone to blame? Is the friendship worth fighting for? How can I prevent this from ever happening again?

Even more upsetting is that women suffering from broken friendships often have no one to confide in—while the loss of a romantic partner garners sympathy among peers, discussing the loss of a platonic friend is often impossible without making other friends jealous or uncomfortable.

Best Friends Forever is the first self-help guide tackling the complex topic of female friendships, including:

- Why Friendships Fall Apart
- How to Get Over Getting Dumped

- Spotting a Toxic Friendship
- How to End a Friendship That Can't Be Fixed
- Moving Forward with New Friends

Drawing from the literature, her own research, and the personal testimonials of more than 1500 women, Dr. Levine explores the myths of the romanticized notion of “best friends forever,” and contends that most friendships, even the best or close ones, are more fragile than permanent.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the qualities that make for a “best friend”? Can a woman have more than one? What types of boundaries should there be between best friends?
2. How are women’s friendships different than men’s?
3. Thinking back, when were the easiest and most difficult times in your life to make new friends?
4. Who is the friend that you have known for the longest time and still consider a close friend? When and how did you meet? What has made the friendship “stick”?
5. What are your expectations of your friends on your birthday? Do you communicate your expectations or wait and see if they remember you? How did your family handle birthdays when you were growing up?
6. Do you feel like you have to juggle friendship with the rest of your life (family, career, school, etc.)? How do you set priorities?
7. Should a woman expect her best friend to provide unconditional support, whatever the circumstances?
8. One study from the UK suggests that we keep only one out of 12 friends we make over the course of a lifetime. Thus, everyone has some fractured friendships. Why do so many friendships end?
9. Have you ever been betrayed by a female friend? Disappointed? Have you ever been replaced by a “new” best friend? Have you ever had a relationship with a friend that felt suffocating? How can women handle such situations? Can they be avoided?
10. Think back about a meaningful friendship that suddenly ended. How did you explain it to the people around you? Were they sympathetic? Were you embarrassed? Why?
11. What was the loneliest period of your life when you felt like you had a “friendship deficit”?
12. What are the signs of a toxic friendship, one that you know isn’t good for you?
13. Are you comfortable having arguments or disagreements with friends? Do conflicts take a toll on a friendship? If so, under what circumstances? What are best ways to apologize to a friend when you did something you know was wrong?

14. Is there any good way to end a friendship? Have you ever ending a friendship successfully? Have you ever tried to end a friendship and then later were sorry for the way you handled it? Is it okay to tell a “white lie” to end a friendship gracefully?
15. If you were ever the friend who was dumped, what are some strategies you used to get over the loss? How can a dumpee achieve closure?
16. What is your favorite book about female friends (besides this one)?
17. What TV shows have you enjoyed that portrayed female friendships? Were they true to life?
18. What are some of the potential complications of extended your female friendships to boyfriends, husbands, other girlfriends, your kids?
19. Do friendship and work mix? What are the advantages and pitfalls of having a close friend at work?
20. Do you favor being part of a group of friends or having one-on-one relationships with other women? How does your personality factor into that equation?
21. Are you the type that stays in touch with friends? What are the best ways to achieve continuity in friendships when your lives go in different directions?
22. What are some of the myths associated with female friendships? Are they changing for our daughters?
23. How have new technologies, like cell phones, e-mail, and social media affected your friendships? Do they strengthen existing friendships? Weaken them? Are online friends real friends?
24. Have you ever found a long-lost friend on the internet and revitalized that friendship? How did it happen?
25. What are the best ways for grown women to make new friends?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Irene S. Levine, Ph.D., is a journalist, psychologist, and professor at the New York University School of Medicine. She spent the major portion of her career in senior policy roles at the National Institute of Mental Health. She writes frequently for magazines and newspapers such as, *Health*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Reader's Digest*, *Self*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*. As the “Friendship Doctor,” she is a regular contributor to *The Huffington Post*. She lives in New York, and is available for interviews and media appearances.



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