

Ep 24. Friendship Now



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Kym Showers

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I am Kym Showers, and this is *Reinvented After 40*, episode number 24: Friendship Now.

Hey, friends. Welcome to *Reinvented After 40*, a podcast for all you women in the second half of life who are ready to take responsibility for your own wellbeing and create a life you love living.

I'm your host, Kym Showers, and after spending the first 40 years of my life people-pleasing and following all the rules, I was exhausted and ready for a change. I reinvented myself. I stopped outsourcing my happiness. And I've been brave enough to live a different kind of life.

I'll be here each week to help you do the same thing. It's gonna be fun. Let's go.

Hey, everyone, welcome back. Today I want to talk to you about friendship. It's a topic that comes up often in my coaching sessions with my own clients. And something I have been coached on several times in the past two years. Friendship is created in our minds, what they think about us, what we think about them, what we think about us in relation to them. I think you knew I was going to say that. Friendship is created by the thoughts that we think, what she thinks about me, what I think about her and what I think about me in relation to her.

We create the way we feel about our friends by the story we tell ourselves in our head. Every relationship we have we create our friendships with our thoughts. I have always been madly in love with friendship. I've almost defined myself by my friends. It was my crown and great achievement. I have loved having lots of close friends and being connected to amazing women. I spent a good amount of my time and energy pursuing friends, supporting friends, and investing in friendships. Making friends has always come easy for me.

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The container of friendship is fun, and lifegiving, and also challenging and very stretching. I've had friends in every life season, high school friends, college friends, young married friends after Jeff and I got married, neighborhood friends, church friends, friends when we had our babies, new friends when our kids started school. And we became friends with our kids' friends' parents. New friends when our kids played sports and we traveled with the teams and became friends with our kids' teammates parents. New friends when we became empty nesters and moved to a new neighborhood.

It's been a lifetime evolution of making new friends and sometimes enduring the awkwardness and pain of friendships that didn't last. All along the way I've been changed by the container of friendship, especially the last two years. Holy cow, the pandemic changed me. It shut down my normal everyday social life that was packed with friends, and lunches, and happy hours, and hugs, and drop-ins, and trips, and dinners, and parties. It also shut down the way I felt about social media.

Social media went from a place that I loved to interact with people, and stay connected, and see what everyone was up to, to a space of fighting, and meanness, and pain, and division. My biggest nightmare. I went through months of feeling alone, and isolated, and I suffered greatly. I wasn't sure I even had friends anymore, and if I did who were they? And where were they? And then to top that off, we moved to a different town where I knew almost no one. And I still know almost no one. I rarely talk to any of my friends that I used to see and talk to every single day.

It's the strangest reality for me and yet it feels exactly right. I can be a little lonely at times but I'm mostly thriving which sounds bizarre. It's like a flipped reality for me. I went from a woman who filled her life with best friends to a woman who actually became her own best friend. The truth is the pandemic wore me out. I just didn't have the energy to try and stay

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connected to friends. I decided to set everyone free and set myself free. I unfollowed most of my friends on social media.

I knew and felt I was at the cusp of a great transformation. And I needed to clear my mind and decide who I was becoming and who I wanted to spend my energy on, the new kind of friend I wanted to invest in and the new kind of friend I intentionally wanted to be. I decided to feel zero obligation to anyone. It's a clean slate for me and it feels amazing. My life went from quantity, lots, and lots of people to quality, a few select people, no more chasing friends, or collecting friends, or needing to be in all the friendship groups.

I let things happen naturally with no expectations. We're either drawn to each other or we're not. We can text or call one another every couple of months and check-in and that's simply enough for me. There are no rules. If you need me I trust you'll let me know and I'll be there. I'm not trying to make you feel loved. I'm not trying to make you feel adored or like you belong, because that's your job. Your job is to be your own best friend. And when you figure out how to do that it solves your friendship drama.

When my dad died I had a few friends show up for me. I texted them and they showed up. I'll never forget that. I'm so happy with this new way of friendship for me now. It feels sustainable and it feels honest. There may come a time when I make new friends in this new town of mine, but it will be in a different way than I've always made friends, it will be organic and slow. I won't and don't win people over anymore or want people to include me in their life. I just think there's an easier, and richer, and better way to become and remain friends.

Two whole people who can enjoy each other's company without manipulation or pressure. I live a different rhythm and a different pace now and I love it. I went into the pandemic with the capacity for an endless amount of friends and I came out of it with the capacity for a few close

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friends. It's been such a revelation and transformation for me. And I've actually leaned into my family, and I love them being my closest friends now. You may have had a similar experience.

Some old friends won't like this new version of you and it's fine, they aren't supposed to. You can let it be okay and move on. And they may reappear some time in your future. Let friendship be a natural evolution of change, and growth, and connection, and closure, and sometimes, reconnection. Sometimes you outgrow people and sometimes they outgrow you. It is the way of friendship.

Most of the friends I had 20 years ago would not be my friends I have today. We wouldn't even be drawn to each other today. I was a different person then and they were different people then. We had different motivations for being friends, this is what's true, and right, and good. So, for today I want to give you my three main thoughts about friendship now.

My first and most important thought about friendship now is become your own best friend. You can't have healthy friendship if you don't know how to be a true friend to yourself first. Your friends can't give you what you can only give yourself. Spend time getting to know who you are and spend time doing the things you really want to do. Notice when you say yes, and you want to say no. Notice when you feel resentment for doing things you really don't want to do. Notice when you betray yourself for the sake of pleasing someone else.

Start being the observer of your life, and your mind, and your wantings. Show yourself the compassion, and forgiveness, and love, and belonging that you generously show everyone else. Tell yourself the truth. Take responsibility for your own feelings and drop into your body and practice feeling them. Notice when you blame a friend for leaving you out or hurting you and know that it's never them, it's always you and your expectations and let that be okay.

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And from this place start getting curious about yourself and the friendship patterns you're in. Do you like it? Is it serving you? Do you like who you are in the friendship? Are you betraying yourself because you don't want to hurt someone's feelings, or you don't want to be left out of the group? Pay attention, stay still. You might need to be brave enough to make a change because it's never them, it's always you. You're the common denominator. You're the one on the cusp of something new and better. And you need to listen to your own soul.

Stop going along with things for the sake of the friendship. True friendship can handle the truth. Be honest with you and do what you need to do. This is the best news. You don't have to change your friends or get better friends. You can do the work to be the kind of friend to yourself that you're looking for in someone else. It's the work that will continually set you free for the rest of your life.

My second main thought about friendship now is to drop your friendship manual. A friendship manual is the list of rules that you have for your friends. This is a friendship killer. Your friends are not here to meet your needs, or to love you well, or to text you every day, or to check-in on you often, or to invite you to all their parties, or to take care of your feelings. You have expectations and rules that will create a lot of disappointment for you.

You may be even unconsciously are being the kind of friend to her that you want her to be to you. And I promise you it will bring you suffering. She is incapable of being who you need her to be. It doesn't matter how good of a friend you are to her, she will disappoint you if you are needing something back from her to help you feel loved, and included, and whole. Friends outside of you cannot do that for you. There isn't a friend on the planet other than yourself who can do that for you.

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So, get rid of the manual, and guidelines, and rules, and lists of what makes a good friend and simply enjoy the friends you have and let them do whatever they want to do. You get to love them, you get to support them, and you get to enjoy them.

My third main thought about friendship now is friendship is 50/50 just like all of life, 50% amazing, and meaningful, and committed, and filled with fun, and joy, and laughter, and cocktails, and beautiful lifegiving experiences. And also, friendship is complicated, and difficult, and scary, and confusing, and vulnerable, and sometimes heartbreaking. It's always been this way and will always be this way and it's supposed to be. It's not supposed to be good and easy all of the time because it isn't.

When friendships struggle or you struggle in a friendship, it doesn't mean something has gone wrong or something is wrong with you. Your brain will want to bounce back and forth from shaming yourself, and then blaming her, and then shaming her, and then blaming yourself. But none of that is helpful, blame and shame is created by thoughts in your head that you loop on, and it becomes very hard to let go of.

Thoughts like I can't believe she did that, I would never do that to her, she's the worst friend. She should have reached out. She should apologize. None of these thoughts are useful and you can let them go and accept the reality of the situation without judgment. Just remind yourself that this is the part of friendship that is hard and it's okay. You can take responsibility for the way you feel by looking at the thoughts you're thinking that create your feeling.

You can drop into your body and feel whatever it is you're feeling without making yourself wrong and without making your friend wrong. You can forgive, forget, and move on any time without making it a big deal. Accepting the good and the not so good parts about friendship makes it so

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much easier. Thinking it should be better than it is makes it so much harder.

So, to recap, my three most useful thoughts about friendship now. Number one, become your own best friend. Number two, drop your friendship manual. And number three, friendship is 50/50.

I've also taken a few tips from my husband, Jeff, which is very ironic. To be honest I did have a little judgment about the way my husband did friendship and has always done friendship. I thought his friendships were linear, and shallow, and a little vanilla. It seemed like all they talked about was work, and sports, and maybe a book they were reading, or a TV show they were watching, and what cigars they like the best.

I thought they should lean into each other and really get to know each other like women do, take care of each other's feelings, and talk about important things, deep meaningful things. But now I think they are really onto something. What I've noticed and what I actually envy is that they may be shallow, and linear, and vanilla, but they stay friends for life. They may only text each other every now and then but they stay connected with zero drama.

So, I'm looking for more of that in my life, something sustainable, and trustworthy, and maybe even shallow, fun, simple, lifelong connection, just good at it. And so, I'm watching and taking notes. And how about you, can you relate to my friendship journey? How do you weather the pandemic? Are you still figuring it out like I am? Just know you are most definitely not alone, and you can take this beautiful opportunity to reinvent your entire idea about friendship if you want to. Borrow some of my thoughts and make up some of your own, whatever feels right and best to you.

There are no friendship rules, we are all just making it up as we go along. So of course, if you would like to make some real progress in this area of

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friendship come work with me one-on-one for six months and I'll help you become your own best friend and build healthy friendships that feel so much better.

Okay my friends, that's what I have for you today and thanks for showing up. And thanks for sharing this episode with your own friends and your family, and for following, rating, and reviewing this podcast. I love you and I'll see you next week.

Thanks for listening to *Reinvented After 40*. If you want more information or resources from the podcast, please visit KymShowersLifeCoach.com.