

I was always the first to message friends. When I stopped I lost my entire circle. Am I a crap person?

## Level 1: Elementary

### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions.

1. When was the last time you spoke to your oldest friend? Who contacted who?
2. Is it difficult to maintain friendships? Why?
3. What is the most important quality a friend can have?

### 2 Key words

a. Match the correct word to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

reach out

evidence

injured

vices

social circle

1. the group of friends and people someone knows well \_\_\_\_\_
2. facts or information that show something is true or not true \_\_\_\_\_
3. bad habits or bad qualities \_\_\_\_\_
4. hurt, especially in the body \_\_\_\_\_
5. to contact someone, usually by message, phone or email \_\_\_\_\_

volunteer

imbalance

neglect

infer

virtues

6. good qualities \_\_\_\_\_
7. to guess or understand something from clues \_\_\_\_\_
8. lack of care or attention \_\_\_\_\_
9. to choose to help or do something without being forced \_\_\_\_\_
10. a situation where two sides are not equal or fair \_\_\_\_\_

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. The police found new \_\_\_\_\_, so they finally understood what happened.
2. After moving to a new city, she wanted to make friends and build a new \_\_\_\_\_.
3. He was \_\_\_\_\_ in the accident, so he could not play football for two months.
4. When nobody called me back, I started to \_\_\_\_\_ that they were angry with me.
5. There was a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ in the group because one person did all the work and the others did very little.
6. She decided to \_\_\_\_\_ at the school because she wanted to help the children.
7. His \_\_\_\_\_, like lying and being selfish, made it hard for people to trust him.
8. I decided to \_\_\_\_\_ to my cousin because we had not spoken for a long time.
9. Kindness and honesty are \_\_\_\_\_ that can make a friendship stronger.
10. You could see the \_\_\_\_\_ in the garden because nobody watered the plants or cleaned the paths.

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*You cannot always infer that people do not like you because they do not reach out first. Maybe there is an imbalance in the friendship.*

**Eleanor Gordon-Smith**

**23 April, 2026**

- 1 I am a 43-year-old man. I have good social skills and I have always had a large social circle. People used to invite someone like me to parties, weddings, birthdays and hiking trips. I did not need to try hard. Last year, I decided to move to a new place: a farm in the country. Then I understood something. I was doing most of the work to keep in touch. I was usually the first person to send a message or make a call. I was the one who would call someone, suggest meeting, and make plans. When I stopped, almost everyone disappeared.
- 2 This year has been hard. My partner has had to listen to most of my sadness. I do not understand it. If I were a terrible person, why did people seem happy to spend time with me? They made me feel welcome. But maybe they only did this when I sent the first message.
- 3 Am I a bad person, or am I missing something?
- 4 Eleanor says: A close friend of mine once hurt his leg badly. He was injured after a motorbike hit him while he was cycling. After the operation, he sent a message to his friends. He said he needed to ask for help. He asked us to choose a day and time to visit someone who needed support. We could help with the rubbish and the cats.

- 5 I do not know how much we would have helped if he had not asked. I want to think we would have helped a lot, but the evidence says maybe not. Many people do not know what to do in a difficult time.
- 6 The important point is this: when my friend asked, people did volunteer. They came to help a friend.
- 7 In a perfect world, people who care about you would always show it. They would call, write, and keep in touch.
- 8 But real life is not perfect. People are busy, shy, tired, or afraid to do the wrong thing. Sometimes there is neglect, and that can hurt.
- 9 But often people are just imperfect friends. Maybe their vices are balanced by their virtues. Ask yourself: are they kind when you are together? Do they enjoy your plans? Then decide if these friendships are still worth keeping.

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Decide if the statements are True or False. Correct the false sentences.

1. The person who needs advice is Elenor Gordon-Smith.
2. The person receiving advice is a man in his 40s.
3. The problems started after he moved to the country.
4. He was the one who always sent messages to his friends first.
5. His partner was the only person he socialised with.
6. He thinks he is a bad person.
7. Elenor's friend got hurt riding his bike.
8. Elenor's friend didn't ask any of his friends for help.
9. Elenor suggests that imperfect friends aren't always bad friends.
10. Elenor suggests that he balance the good qualities of his friends along with the bad.

### 4 Key language

a. Categorise the words below into the table.

call someone      keep in touch      make plans      send a message  
ask for help      make a call      invite someone  
help a friend      visit someone      move to a new place

Making Contact	Keeping Relationships Going	Life Changes and Support

b. Add any other phrases you can think of to the table.

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### c. Complete the sentences with you own ideas.

1. To keep in touch with friends, I \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The last time I helped a friend, I \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When I have a party, I \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I always \_\_\_\_\_ to make plans.
5. \_\_\_\_\_.

## 5 Discussion

### a. Discuss these statements.

- If a friendship takes effort, it is a bad friendship.
- Friends should always put an equal amount of effort into a friendship.
- The best friendships are the ones you've had the longest.

## 6 In your own words

### a. Think about a time when you had a problem with a close friend or family member; either when you stopped talking or had a miscommunication or argument. Your response should include:

- what happened
- why it happened
- how you resolved (or didn't!) the situation
- what you learned about your friendship from that situation

### b. Tell your story to a partner. Agree on the best story and who should share it with the class.