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Friends Are A Gift You Give Yourself

By Skye Thomas

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by: **Skye Thomas**

My oldest boy is fifteen and was a real jerk about a month ago. He had gotten pretty full of himself and acted like he was too cool for the rest of the family. Pretty typical teenager behavior, but I didn't like it. I had gotten to the end of my patience with him and laid into him about how lousy it felt to be treated that way. We ended up in a huge fight. He argued that he wasn't acting any different than normal and that I was just choosing to see things negatively. So, I laid out numerous examples of his selfish "me me me" behaviors without stopping to take a second breath. He hates it when I go off like that, but once he was ready to really talk, I came down off of my soapbox. He was close to tears. Apparently, I'd hit a nerve. He confessed that his closest friends at school had been trying to tell him the same thing recently and he wasn't hearing them. Now he suddenly knew what it was they had been trying to say. He felt awful and began to make immediate changes in his behaviors towards others. He really hated the idea that he was hurting anyone's feelings by being cold and uncaring.

We talked a lot that night about how family sort of has to put up with each other. Family is always there for you. Family can embarrass you and you still have to acknowledge them in public. Family can and will scream at you until you finally get the point that you're being a jerk. You really don't have much choice over who your family is.

Friends, on the other hand, are a gift that you give yourself. Friends don't have to put up with your attitudes if they don't want to. Friends can leave you hanging if you're not very nice towards them. Friends aren't friends for very long if you're embarrassing them in public. Friends usually won't scream at you to get their point across. You handpick your friends to be something different and special. They aren't quite the same as family.

In order to have friends, you have to be a friend. Do you listen to them? Do you care for them? Do you encourage them? You have to give a lot of yourself to be a good friend to someone. But in the end, you are the one who benefits the most. It's not about becoming some kind of martyr without any personal needs or thoughts towards your own well-being. It's more about nurturing a cherished

Friends Are A Gift You Give Yourself

relationship. That way, you have a dear friend to hang out with when your family is driving you bonkers. You have someone to laugh and play with. You have someone safe to share your hopes and dreams with. You have someone to talk to who isn't going to blab to the rest of the family that you think your mom is an overbearing control freak or that your stepfather isn't turning out to be your idea of what a dad could be.

Through our discussions that night, we were able to tap into what was it about my son that made him such a great guy to hang out with over the years. It was his ability to genuinely care about others and his intuitive compassion for everyone that made him more than just popular, but a real friend to all. He's the kind of guy who always sticks up for the smaller kids and looks after the lost children. Once I reminded him of who he used to be, he realized how much of his focus had turned inwards towards himself instead of outwards towards those whom he cared about. He said that he'd gotten so wrapped up in his new cool friends and in his public image at school that he hadn't even understood what his old friends were talking about when they said he was cold and uncaring now. Turning his attention

inwards had caused him to alienate many of his closest friends and family. Now he suddenly felt very much alone in the world. Luckily, it hadn't been happening for very long before I'd blown up at him and made him look at it. He was able to quickly readjust back into the caring person he used to be and was able to feel loved and supported by his friends and family again. He passionately dove back into his friendships.

He learned that you can treat your brother like garbage and he's always your brother and you will have to see each other at family gatherings whether you ever learn to be close or not. Friends on the other hand, can and will walk out of your life if you are cold and uncaring towards them. Family will eventually just shrug their shoulders and excuse your self-absorbed behavior as just the way you are, friends won't. I find it's the friendships that we love and nurture like family that last forever as if they were family. And, it's the family members that we love and nurture like friends that we form the strongest and closest bonds with.

They say that we learn our social skills from our siblings, but I'm not so sure about that anymore. My stepmother wasn't a very nurturing type and when we were younger my sister and I were not very close. So through my girlfriends, I got that female connection that I just couldn't get from my family. My girlfriends became my surrogate family and taught me a lot about how to really be there for someone else. My sister and I have only recently become friends in the last few years. We are forming a different kind of bond than what we had when we were children. It's much better now. I would never treat my friends the way I used to treat my sister!

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Skye Thomas began writing books and articles with an everyday practical approach to life in 1999 after twenty years of studying spirituality, metaphysics, astrology, personal growth, motivation, and parenting. After years of high heels and business clothes, she is currently enjoying working from home in her pajamas. Go to

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of one of her books.

How to Give the "Gift of a Lifetime"

By Van Day

Giving that special someone a special gift can be very difficult. Depending on the situation and occasion, it can be a very tricky thing. You want to do the right thing, but if you're not careful, it can backfire. As many have found out, you need to give this some considerable thought.

But everyone wants to give the "right" gift. What makes up a great gift?

In my experience, a great gift: Is truly unique, personal and creative; Demonstrates to the recipient the thoughtfulness and caring that went into securing the gift; Evokes emotions from the recipient whenever it is used, seen or thought about; and Makes the recipient truly feel special.

A great gift doesn't necessarily have to cost hundreds or thousands of dollars to be great. But also understand that getting a gift that is cheap can show how much "you don't care." Before you start to shop and buy, also consider the following:

1. Who is the recipient? Is it your spouse, significant other, sibling, parents, relative, close friends, neighbor or business associate?

2. Next, what is the occasion? Holiday, birthday, anniversary, graduation, wedding, engagement, promotion, a "just because" occasion, or "I-need-to-get-out-of- the-doghouse-occasion?"

3. Be yourself. The gift is from you, so make sure it shows it. But be appropriate, and be sure the gift is something that the recipient will relate to and enjoy.

4. Try to avoid excessiveness. Simple gifts tend to also be very well received.

5. Don't wait until the last minute. It only gives you too little time to get a great gift, and also shows how much you don't care.

Being creative is a fantastic way to ensure getting the right gift. People love it when it's obvious their gift required some imagination and creativity. So as you're going through the "what do I get them" process, remember that a little bit of creativity, uniqueness and personalization will go a long, long way!

The true measure of a great gift will be seen in the eyes of the recipient when they get it. You'll know it, you'll feel it, and you'll feel great yourself when you've given the "Great Gift"!

Van Day is a renowned pianist and musician, and creator of "Piano Music 4 You.com ." "Piano Music 4

You" specializes in creating personalized, custom and unique CDs of piano music, created especially

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for each customer and all occasions. He can be reached at

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