

## **Friendship-Raise the Sparks Newsletter #19**

Dear Friends:

On a recent Saturday night my wife handed me the phone and said, “You won’t believe who is on the line.” I picked up the phone and it turned out to be my friend Richie who I haven’t spoken to or seen in over 30 years. A few days later, Richie and Melissa, another long lost friend visited me in my home. Shortly after that, Richie sent me an e-mail; part of which I believe is important to share. He said, “Funny thing about jumping back into people’s lives. It reminds me of having started a book and skipping a couple of hundred pages before resuming. What must have transpired in the interim? Simply alluding to them does not convey even a fraction of the skipped events”.

Both Richie and I felt a sense of loss for all of the years that we weren’t in each other’s lives. I began to think about why we had drifted apart and now that we had reconnected how to prevent it from happening again. I was reminded what is said in the great Jewish moral tractate Pirke Avos (Ethics of our Fathers). In mishna 1:6 Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachya says, “Provide a teacher for yourself and acquire for yourself a friend and judge each person favorably”. This one simple sentence sheds a lot of light on friendship; both how to make and keep friends and what constitutes a true friend. Let’s look at each of the three components:

### **Acquire for Yourself a Friend**

Rabbi Yehoshua uses the term acquire regarding friendship. In the American Heritage Dictionary, one of the definitions of acquire is, “to get by one’s own efforts”. Implicit in this definition is the need to exert effort in order to obtain something. When it comes to friends this is all the more so. Effort needs to be exerted to both establish and maintain relationships.

On a personal level, I make a conscious effort to nurture my existing relationships and I remain open to new or renewed friendships. There are of course people in my life with whom I communicate with almost daily. Beyond that, there are people who I want to see or speak with yet time often passes without contact. To make sure that there are no extended lapses in our friendship, at the beginning of each month, I make a list of the names of people I need to contact one or more times during the upcoming month. At the end of the month, I review this list to make sure that I have honored this personal contract with myself. Prior to this practice, months could go by before I spoke with people, who because of distance or circumstances I was out of touch with. Now my life is all the richer because these people are back in my life. I like the idea that each of our lives is a story in a novel. By staying in touch with the people that matter to us, we get to live the complete versus the abridged version.

### **Provide a Teacher for Yourself**

Most traditional commentaries say that this statement is about searching out and finding a teacher for yourself. Having a teacher is part of friendship as well. Seek out friends who challenge you and motivate you to grow. Although we may be comfortable

around people who reflect our values and beliefs, it is also important to develop friendships with people who push us to grow and force us to step out of our comfort zone. This process will help keep the friendship dynamic and stimulating. There is one caveat to this rule. Seek out healthy positive people. It's not a good idea to be friends with someone who challenges you with negative or destructive thinking.

### **Judge each Person Favorably**

Judging each person favorably is the key to maintaining long term friendships. In any friendship, there are going to be times that friends do or say something which upset us. A true friend is someone who in that moment does not react negatively. Of course it takes effort to do this. We all have had one or more friendships in the past dissolve because ultimately we didn't judge the other person favorably; that we didn't give the other person the benefit of the doubt. Judging favorably can include saying that they acted the way they did because they didn't feel well, or because there was a misunderstanding. The key is to bring love and forgiveness into your heart. I'm sure that when you've done something to upset a friend, you would hope for compassion and understanding from him or her.

When Richie called me on that recent Saturday night it was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect. By seizing that opportunity, I've enriched my life. I'm not able to read the missing pages from our years apart. I do know that from here on in we will continue to make entries in the book of our friendship.

As a certified life coach, I am available to help you with your friendship and relationship issues. Check out my website [www.raisetheparks.com](http://www.raisetheparks.com) to learn more. You will also find additional articles to help in your personal transformation as well as upcoming events. Please feel free to share this newsletter with others. You can place someone's name on our e-mail list by sending their address to [moshek@aol.com](mailto:moshek@aol.com) Once we receive it we will make sure they receive all of our future mailings. Feel free to e-mail me via the contact button on my webpage with any comments or questions.

Yours in peace,  
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