

LL61-Are you a good friend?

I'm Doug Weiss, and I'm Alvean Lyons, Welcome to Love Life

Over the last couple of months we've had a few occasions to really speak to real connection, meaningful relationships, how we define those things and what they really mean to us. We've been peeling back some layers where that's concerned and we were asked a question in that regard recently, and the question is, are you a good friend? So I would ask how would you define what it means to be a good friend and then by virtue of that definition. How would you answer that question Douglas?

Doug:

To me, friendship and relationship are interchangeable words.

By that I mean that a friendship is something that you invest in in the same way that you invest in a relationship. A friendship requires, to use the words you first introduced in our conversations about true love, vulnerability and transparency, and requires honesty. So a friend is someone who is invested in me, someone who is both willing and able to be honest with me, and a friend is someone who places my welfare, at least on a level playing with their own. I think if we held to that standard in our lives, many of the people we call friends might not meet that standard. In the last few episodes, we've talked about kind of casualness affecting our use of language, certainly, as it applies to the words love and intimacy. Here again we may have another

It's even worse now with social media. We're friends on Facebook or Instagram or whatever. I say this not in a boastful way because there's nothing worth boasting about, but I have 300 or so people and that's probably nothing by social media standards that are my so-called friends on Facebook. I did not friend most of these people. How we're connected, how that came about, I suspect has more to do with the way in which Facebook works because it consciously places you in a position of having to friend someone to have a connection. I have a lot of acquaintances. I genuinely want to connect with people I met in my professional and personal life but to say that they're my friends is really not true. That's a social convention, and it's also true that there are people I see frequently, who are part of my social circle, I would describe as friends of mine. But to be perfectly clear there's only a handful that meet the definition we brought brought up earlier. The people who have been there consistently throughout my life for as long as I have known them and have been there for me. People I can count on who I expect and have demonstrated that they are willing to be honest with me, be supportive and people who will be part of my life as long as we both are in a position to do that.

For me, friend is not as elastic a notion as it is perhaps it is for other people.

Alvean:

I used a word that I think is so apropos for how leader should define friendship. Friendship is an issue of investment and investment for me really speaks to sacrifice. What am I willing to give up for you. I have referenced this before when we were doing the segment on true love. I have

learned how to be a true friend as a byproduct of someone being an incredible friend to me. 've talked about Chelsea before but whenever I think about love and friendship, she's the first person I think about because of the way in which she does friendship. I can't speak for what it's like for anybody else to be friends with her, but to be on the other side of her love, to be on the other side of her friendship is to understand what it really means for someone to be willing to give of themselves in order to see the best happened for you. Chelsea happens to be a lupus warrior. So, you know, she's actively fighting against a disease that I absolutely believe she will conquer without question, but there are days that I know she pushes past how she feels in order to be there for me without my request and sometimes I have to look at her and say you need to go back home. It's okay. I can do this. You don't need to do this, and she'll push anyway because she is that kind of friend. I am going to be there for you for as long as I'm capable of being there for you and in deeper yet and you better let me. So sometimes I have to just let her be there for me because it is it is so wired inside of her that love is to give and to serve and to be there. if you think about Gary Chapman's work on the five love languages, when your inclination to love is through your language it takes the form of quality time and words of affirmation. So I tend to love in the same way. I tend to give love in the same way that I like to receive love, but other people may need you to deliver that love in a language that they speak and her love is often in acts of service. She is always there for me and I did not have a concept of what it feels like to have somebody be there for you like that before, I was always the friend. You can call at three o'clock in the morning and it doesn't matter. I don't mind sacrificing my sleep to be there because language for me are words of affirmation. That's how I would love but to understand what it feels like to have someone show up for you, to be present for you, to sit by your bedside when you are sick, to go pick up your prescription, to be there for your kids..... if you're at that point in your life to understand friendship through the lens of service one to another it changes the way you understood friendship such that I wanted to be a better friend to her and to the other people in my life. I could feel what it was like to have someone be there for me like that to the point I understood what a good friend does. I recognize, to your point, that I am only a good friend to a small group of people, because those are the people I will get out of my bed for at three o'clock in the morning. Those are the people that if I have it in my bank account then you're going to be okay. Those are the people for whom I don't worry about myself first. I think about what it is they need and then we'll figure out the rest after the fact.

Friendship is an investment at real levels but the return that comes from that cannot be measured. It's the thing that you take with you to the grave and I would never know those things had it not been for what she's taught me inside the friendship. I think, you know, there are degrees of Friendship and there are many people in my life for whom I do things that require considerable effort on my part, but I would not count them as friends. It's possible that we could become friends if time and circumstances permitted. We would invest sufficiently in each other to become friends by the definition I used but because of the history we share I still do these things for them. Out of respect for that history.

Doug:

Peggy and I were talking about this the other day because she has a 'friend' in a similar profession who makes frequent and significant requests on her time and resources to help her professionally and in the time that I've known this individual I have never seen them reciprocate. The relationship seems to be one dimensional, what you can do for me not necessarily what I can do for you. So why do you do that, I asked Peggy, not to be provocative, but out of curiosity and she allowed as to how she asked herself that question sometimes. In the end she said that she felt that this was something that she wanted to do, and that speaks volumes about who she is. In a similar situation, I had a call from a former colleague, not a friend, someone with whom I had worked but did not know very well. There was a job opening some place where I knew somebody and my colleague asked if I could help. Well, this isn't a big deal, all it required of me was getting in touch with people, writing a note, following up spending an hour on the phone to give this person an understanding of the organization they might go to work for and some advice about how to handle the interview. All told that required maybe an hour or two of my time. And I didn't think twice about doing it, I've always been more than happy to do that for people as long as I can ethically and responsibly do so. That's not friendship. That's just connection. Not to be cranky about this, but I do think we have allowed our sense of what it means to be a friend to become less impactful, less important more casual. The whole notion that these are my friends, this is my family is fundamentally a fiction. S

Alvean:

I'm with you on that because people who are in my intimate circle find out very quickly that friendship for us is family and family is investment and sacrifice. We call it our red zone. There are lots of rings and there are lots of people who are part of those rings, but not everybody is inside of your red zone and that's where friendship and family really rests, the people that you will lay it down for. When you have that it is an enormous gift but it is not going to be in the 5000 people that you have on Facebook for sure.

Doug:

Well, we certainly hope that you have some true friends in your life. We've enjoyed being with you and we'll be back next week with more. If you have some thoughts about this or any episode please write to us at doug@lovelife.digital or alvean@lovelife.digital

We want to thank Kamaria Mason, our producer, Todd Washburn, our Recording Engineer and the entire Love Life family, including you, our listeners. We'll be back next week with another episode. Until then, have a wonderful week. Bye folks.

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