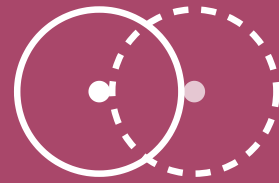


Friendships and Friendship Breakups

Understand what happened, care for yourself, and decide what you want next.



Welcome. Friendships shape our health and our days, and few people teach us how to handle them ending. Many people grieve a friend quietly, because there is no ritual for it. You do not need to justify that grief here. Use this handout in session, in a group, or on your own.

FIVE COMMON WAYS FRIENDSHIPS END

HOW IT ENDED	WHAT HAPPENED	IT OFTEN FEELS LIKE
Drift	Contact fades with no fight or decision.	<i>sad, and unsure it is allowed</i>
Rupture	A conflict or falling out.	<i>anger, replaying the argument</i>
Betrayal	Trust was broken.	<i>shock, hurt, staying on guard</i>
Your choice	You step back or end it.	<i>relief, guilt, and doubt</i>
Life change	A move, baby, job, or shift in values.	<i>loss with no villain</i>

Most endings are a mix. A drift can hold a hurt. A rupture can hold relief. You may see yourself in more than one row.

START HERE, 60 SECONDS

Place both feet on the floor. Think of one friend, past or present. Notice how your body feels when you picture them: open, tense, warm, or flat. Just notice. Then look around the room.

IF IT GETS TO BE TOO MUCH

Stop. Look around and name 3 things you can see. Feel your feet. Every practice in this handout works with eyes open, and you can pause at any time.

Please read: this handout is education. It is not a substitute for therapy or medical care, and it does not diagnose or treat any condition. Skip anything that feels like too much.



Understand: why friend loss hurts

UNDERSTAND

Friends are attachment too

Friends meet needs for belonging, being known, and shared history. Over years, a friend becomes part of your routines, your stories, and your sense of who you are. When that ends, you lose the person and a piece of your daily life.

Why it can feel unrecognized

There is no ritual for ending a friendship. Researchers call losses like this ambiguous or disenfranchised grief. Mutual friends and social media can keep the wound open. If you have hidden this hurt, you are not alone.

SUPPORTIVE

- Mutual give and take
- Repair after conflict
- Room to be yourself
- Care when you struggle

STRAINED

- One sided effort
- Cool or inconsistent
- Resentment building
- Hard talks get avoided

HARMFUL

- Put downs or control
- Broken trust, repeated
- Pressure and secrecy
- You feel small or unsafe

Most friendships move between supportive and strained. Harmful patterns usually call for distance. **ILLUSTRATION**

COMMON REACTIONS

BODY

- Sleep and appetite changes
- Heavy or tense chest
- Low energy

FEELINGS

- Sadness and longing
- Anger or rejection
- Relief mixed with guilt

THOUGHTS

- 'What did I do wrong?'
- Replaying conversations
- Fear of losing others

BEHAVIOR

- Checking their profile
- Pulling away from everyone
- Over explaining to mutual friends

MYTH VS REALITY

MYTH

A friendship breakup is no big deal.

REALITY

Friends meet real needs, so losing one can hurt deeply.

MYTH

Someone has to be the bad guy.

REALITY

Friendships also end from drift, timing, and change.

MYTH

Real friends never need space or change.

REALITY

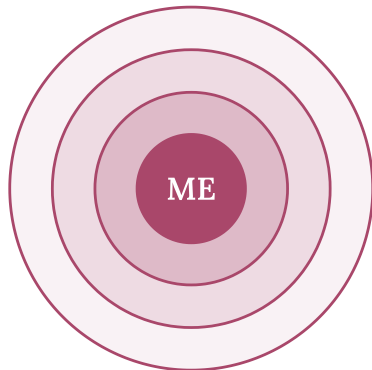
Healthy friendships adjust, and can end well.

Culture and context: Friendship norms vary. For many people, friends are chosen family, and in close communities a falling out ripples widely. Your loss counts.



My friendship circles

Write names on the lines, past or present. Notice who sits where, and who you wish were closer.



Inner circle

The 1 to 3 people I trust most

Close friends

People I can be real with

Good friends

Fun, shared interests, community

Friendly faces

Neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances

What this friendship gave me

What it cost me

The hard parts

Tick anything you are carrying today.

- ☐ Feeling rejected or left behind
- ☐ Mutual friends and group chats
- ☐ Seeing them online
- ☐ Second guessing what I did
- ☐ Fear of losing more friends
- ☐ Grieving someone who is still alive

Repair, pause, or release?

Tick the ones that are true. A guide, not a verdict.

- ☐ When I struggle, do they show up?
- ☐ Can we talk about hard things without punishment?
- ☐ Has this pattern repeated?
- ☐ Do I feel more like myself around them?
- ☐ Are we both willing to say what we need?

Mostly ticked: consider repair. Mixed: one honest talk, or a pause. Few ticked: consider release, with care for yourself.

Get curious

1. What did this friendship give you that you still want in your life?
2. What did you learn about your needs and limits?
3. Where do you feel this loss in your body or your day?
4. Who is one person who feels safe to reach out to?



Take care and move forward

COPING TOOLS

Too much? Stop. Look around the room, name 3 things you can see, feel your feet, and reach out to someone you trust. Every practice works with eyes open.

2 min • • •

Name the Loss

A wave of missing them hits.

1. Feel your feet and look around.
2. Rest a hand on your chest.
3. Say: 'I miss what we had, and it makes sense this hurts.'
4. Breathe out slowly.

10 min • • •

The Unsent Letter

You have words with nowhere to go.

1. Start with 'Dear ____.'
2. Write what you valued, what hurt, and what you wish.
3. Do not send it.
4. Keep it, or let it go.

30 min • • •

One Small Reach

You want to rebuild connection.

1. Text one safe person.
2. Make one low pressure plan, like a walk.
3. Do one comfort you enjoy alone.
4. Notice how each felt.

WHAT YOU MIGHT SAY

IF YOU WANT TO REPAIR

I have been thinking about us, and I miss you. Would you be open to talking?

IF YOU WANT A PAUSE

I need some space right now. It is about my capacity, and I care about you.

IF YOU ARE CLOSING IT

I do not think this friendship is working for me anymore. I wish you well.

If you were the one left: You may not get closure. Closure often comes from within: name what you learned, and let some questions stay open. Rebuilding takes time: one study suggests about 50 hours together to become casual friends, and about 200 for close friends (Hall, 2018).

When to reach out: Consider individual support if grief is not easing after several months, you are isolating, or your mood is low most days. If a friend was controlling or unsafe, talk with a professional about safety. If you have thoughts of suicide, call or text 988 now.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Books: Platonic by Marisa Franco, PhD (2022). Big Friendship by Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman (2020).

Research: Hall (2018), Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 36(4). Holt-Lunstad et al. (2010), PLoS Medicine. Doka (1989), Disenfranchised Grief. Boss (1999), Ambiguous Loss.

Therapist or facilitator

Next session

Questions:
soulflotherapy.com/contact

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT RIGHT NOW

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988 **Crisis Text Line:** text HOME to 741741

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

This handout is education and does not replace therapy.