

21 days  
to making friendships happen!

*Your own*  
**PERSONAL GUIDE**  
*for*  
**FOSTERING**  
**FRIENDSHIPS**  
*in YOUR LIFE*

**shasta nelson**

written to accompany her book *Friendships Don't Just Happen!*  
*The Guide to Creating a Meaningful Circle of GirlFriends*

The successful personal relationships we have with others increase our longevity, elevate our happiness, decrease our stress, and enhance our self-esteem; they motivate us in other areas of our lives and improve our physical and emotional health. Few factors have as much impact in our lives as our sense of connection to other people. I invite women of all ages and life stages to step into a journey of intentionally strengthening our connectedness and sense of belonging. The fact that you hold little workbook in your hands is no small thing. It means, among other things, that you have already “put the stake in the ground,” proving to yourself that friendship matters to you. You are embarking on heart work that will improve your life in so many ways. You have stepped into that and given voice to the desire. Though each of us would articulate our needs differently, what we all have in common is the desire for more belonging and a willingness to help develop that in our lives. I applaud you for this willingness. Even if you doubt, or can’t exactly express why you chose to do this, you are willing. And that is beautiful.

I invite you to come on this journey with hope, expectation, joy, and a sense of trust. You can trust yourself to reveal what you need to hear along the way. You don't need to force it, hide it, limit it, fear it, or try to conjure it up. Just show up, be as honest as you can about where you are, and take it one day at a time. Whatever you need to know or however you need to move—you will see it at the right time, and it will ring with truth.

*To your journey,*

**Shasta**

## Overview:

This workbook contains 21 readings and exercises. Each one will take about 20-30 minutes. They are fun, insightful, meaningful, and soul-expanding.

## Setting Expectations:

- **Pace:** Some women will set aside 21 days and choose to do 1 exercise daily. Others will do 1 every couple of days. There is no wrong pace. I only suggest that you don't do more than 1 at a time, since part of the work is bringing your attention back to the subject of friendship regularly. Trust that "tomorrow" is soon enough to step into the next exercise. They are not something to "get through" as much as they are something to help you "become," so be patient in the work of awareness and transformation.
- **Attitude:** Approach each day with innocence, believing that you come with everything you need to step into that experience. Part of seeking honesty and authenticity is being willing to see truth. But truth does not mean feeling bad; rather, it means accepting that what we see is being revealed at just the right time. We will not allow self-sabotaging behavior to prevent us from growth. We will hold a light-hearted attitude with each exercise, smiling at ourselves and appreciating that we care enough to engage. We will do our best to hold hope in our heart, giving ourselves as much grace as we need.

## Supplies Needed:

- **A journal:** If you feel most comfortable working on your computer, then please do that, but writing in a journal allows you some additional creativity: you can circle things, doodle, underline, and sometimes brainstorm more easily without worrying about typos and formatting. Use the blank pages in this workbook as your journal, or go buy one that inspires you to fill its pages!
- **A dedicated time and space:** Decide when and where you will participate. First thing in the morning? Last thing before bed? During your lunch break? And, pick a place where you can be alone and feel safe. Different locations give different energies. Where do you need to be to engage, be honest with yourself, and feel creative?

## Day 1: Honoring Our Reality

The best place to begin is to acknowledge where you are, as I had to do after I first arrived in San Francisco. One day I found myself standing on Polk Street, looking in the windows of a café at a group of women laughing and enjoying each other's company, and being envious of what they had together. (I tell this story on the first page of my book, for those of you who haven't read it yet.) Admitting our need is where we all start. In my case I had many friends I could call, but no one who lived close by that could meet me in a café to just talk. I wanted local friends.

It is easy to live in the past and in the future. Both places can serve us well, but for this moment, as we begin, we are here. And we're here for a reason.

You have chosen to go on this journey because you want to grow and expand who you are. And so, like a child standing in a doorway for her height to be measured; you, too, are standing in your own metaphoric doorway of relationship growth.

I hope that you come as a child does, with eager anticipation of leaving an honest mark so your growth can be charted along the way. Perhaps as you arrive at this doorway you will see some of your past marks or measurements, or maybe this is a new doorway ready to record your growth from now on. Either way, you have grown long before this moment, and we should acknowledge that and pause to celebrate that. A child being measured simply wants to "grow big"; she brings no sense of blame or fear to the moment. She knows that she will keep growing taller and that how quickly the growth happens isn't about anything she has done right or wrong. She isn't making a decision about how tall she will someday grow. There is no "right" height for her to be. Rather, the measurement ritual is a tangible way to acknowledge that she has grown steadily since she was born and to provide visual evidence that there is still more growth to come. And so, you are invited to come as she does—to honestly acknowledge this moment and anticipate your growth without fear or trepidation.

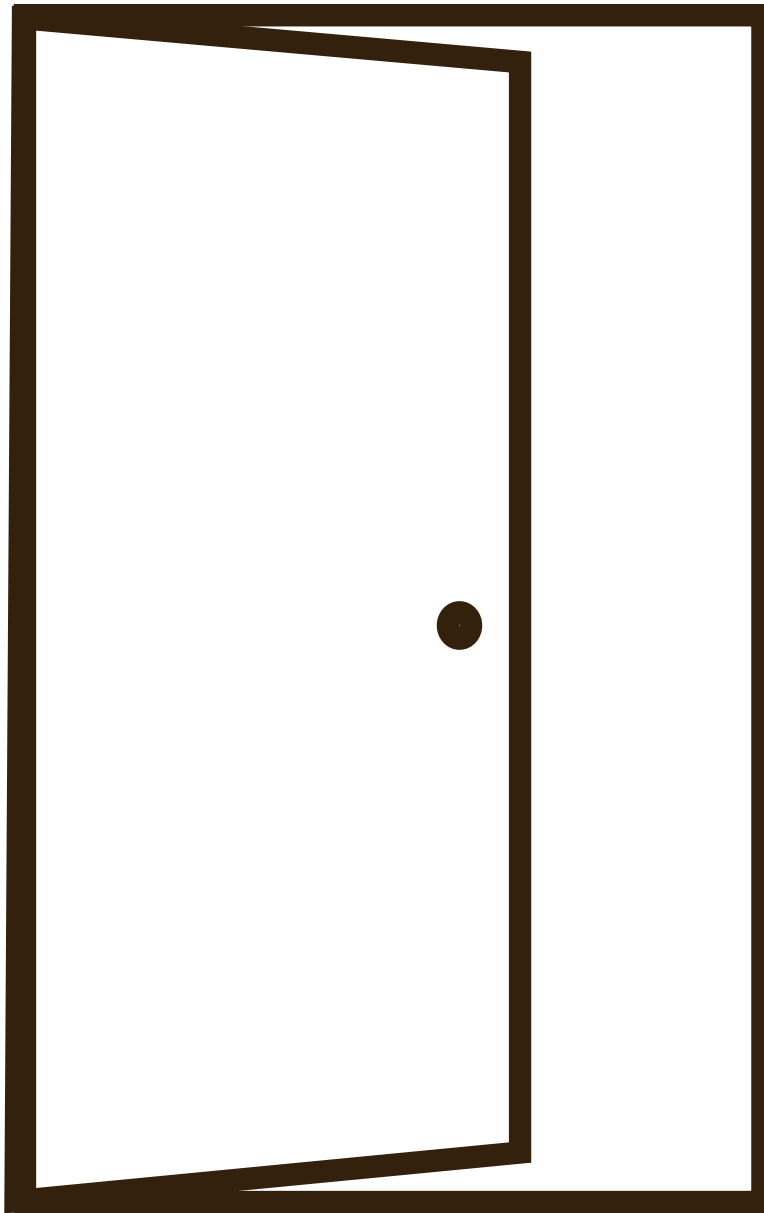
### Exercise

1. First, take three deep breaths. Breathe in the present and breathe out everything you carried into this place. Breathe in peace and breathe out stress. Breathe in hope and breathe out shame.
2. Now, picture your doorframe on the next page. At the top is "Complete Friendship Fulfillment" and at the bottom is "Complete Friendship Dissatisfaction."

Step into your doorframe. Where are you right now? Without second-guessing yourself or trying to analyze your decision, simply make the mark. Go with your instinct.

3. Then allow yourself 10-15 minutes to write with honesty about what that mark means to you. What prompted you to place it where you did? What does it reveal? What situations or people in your life informed that placement? Do you think that the placement was based on 1 or 2 pieces of your relational experience, or was it a comprehensive assessment? What prevented the mark from being lower? What prevented it from being higher? Are you surprised in any way with where you placed it? Be specific. Be comprehensive. Create a snapshot of what this moment in your relational life looks and feels like.
4. When you are finished, write this blessing at the bottom of your page: ***"I am growing in my ability to give and receive love. And I'm grateful for that."***

## Complete Friendship Fulfillment



## Complete Friendship Dissatisfaction

## Day 2: Expressing Our Wants

One of the values of engaging in 21 days of greater focus is that our awareness and intention begins to shift to align us externally with that which is happening internally. So the question begs to be asked: What do you want to focus on?

Depending upon our backgrounds and worldviews, we might use different language to describe this "aligning." Some might call it the Law of Attraction—putting out to the Universe that which you want to attract and inviting it into your life. Christians have a saying, "By beholding you become changed." Others might call it a form of Karma, meaning that what you put out there has a way of coming back to you. Buddha is quoted as saying, "All that we are is the result of what we have thought." Physics has Newton's three laws of motion, which state, among other things, that momentum is only created by another moving force; inertia does not create movement.

But what we all know, however we describe it, is that when we exert energy toward something it has a way of moving us closer. It sounds almost too simple, but somehow our eyes are more open to possibilities, resources, and opportunities when we are looking for them. Maybe you've had an experience like that of one of my friends, after she was diagnosed with cancer. Suddenly it seemed to her that everyone was talking about cancer—on the news, in books, in movies, etc. Conversation about cancer probably didn't increase overnight, but certainly her awareness of it did. We hear, experience, see, and engage in that which we choose to filter into our lives.

What do you want to move toward? What do you want to focus your thoughts on? What do you want more of in your life? What do you want to open yourself to? What do you want to attract?

### Exercise

1. Today you are going to make a list. A long list. A wish list. You are going to state your desires, your wants, and your needs. What makes doing this hard is that many of us feel we should "just be content" with what we already have. Let that go for now. There is a place for that and this is not that place. ☺ To say that you want meaningful connections and to be in loving relationships is nothing but beautiful, and we are going to step into that beauty.

On the following page make a list, with every line starting "I want..."

Fill up as many lines as you can, continuing with every thought that pops into your head or heart. Nothing is too small or too big. Nothing is redundant. Nothing is too vague or too specific. Simply let yourself write whatever you think of, without applying any defensive filters.

To help get you started, look back at the measurement you took yesterday. What factors would have made that mark higher? What do you want in your life to help you experience relational fulfillment? Put everything on this list that you hunger for in your relationships. Specify what would make you feel a stronger sense of connectedness. List the things that would increase your sense of belonging. List the results you want to experience. List the activities you want to be doing with people, or the types of relationships you want, or the kinds of people you want in your life, or the changes you want in your current relationships.

What do I  
really, really,  
**REALLY**  
want in my relationships?

1. I want... \_\_\_\_\_
2. I want... \_\_\_\_\_
3. I want... \_\_\_\_\_
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24. I want... \_\_\_\_\_
25. I want... \_\_\_\_\_

2. We will come back to this list later. For now, when your wish list is all on paper and out of your head, simply acknowledge the beauty within you that hungers for deeper connections: "I love that I still have so much to move toward, and I look forward to experiencing this life with others in meaningful ways."



## Day 3: Remembering Our Connectedness

Our memories are powerful. Which ones have influenced and shaped you?

It's easy to focus on the relational wounds and disappointments we've all survived. We can see where our fear of rejection comes from or how our unmet expectations shape our hesitations in intimacy. And while we can and will learn from those memories, so they empower us; even more significant, perhaps, is our ability to remember that which has filled us, too.

To fully engage, I invite you to breathe deeply in such a way that raises your shoulders on your inhale and drops them on your exhale. Again. Roll your head around in a small circle and be aware of your body relaxing. Bring a child-like innocence and trust to this moment, like when you believed in Santa and thought you deserved all the presents in the world. Pretend that you are too young to fake humility, too hopeful to manage expectations, and too fabulous to pretend otherwise.

### Exercise:

1. First you are going to remember a specific moment in your life. The memory you are looking for is a time in your life when you felt connected. Truly connected. Supported. Surrounded. Filled. Involved. It should be a memory of a time when you felt loved, you sensed cohesiveness in your relational life, you felt that your capacity for community was being expanded and filled.

Close your eyes and play back tapes from different eras of your life, recalling when you felt you had meaningful friendships in your life. Now pick only one memory. It doesn't have to be "the best" one—just the one that strikes you as a moment when you truly felt a sense of belonging. You will know which one to go with because you will find yourself nodding, or your heartstrings will be tugged. Take a picture of that moment and hold it for a minute.

2. Now, on the next page, in the dream cloud, I want you vividly capture this memory in words. What is the picture you see? What do you remember? What is it about this memory that speaks to you? What qualities or aspects of it do you cherish? What was present in this moment that moved you and filled you? Write as much as you can as your heart shifts to make room to imprint this empowering memory. As you write about the memory, also take a moment to notice how you feel and include that in your journaling.
3. When you are finished writing, take a moment to see the goodness on your page. You don't even need to read the words, just see the ink. Place the palm of your hand on your open journal and simply express gratitude. "I'm grateful to have this memory, to have lived this, and to have experienced it. It helps remind me of what I will continue to embrace."



## Day 4: Acknowledging Our Modeling

One profound impact on our social circle may be the modeling—the actions and behaviors of others—that we witnessed in our formative years. As I mention on page 6 of ***Friendships Don't Just Happen!***, it's how most of us have learned about friendship!

Acknowledging that others have influenced us does not mean that we do things the same way they do or that we are in any way similar to them. No one prescribed who we are or who we will become. But others have served us by showing us different ways to be.

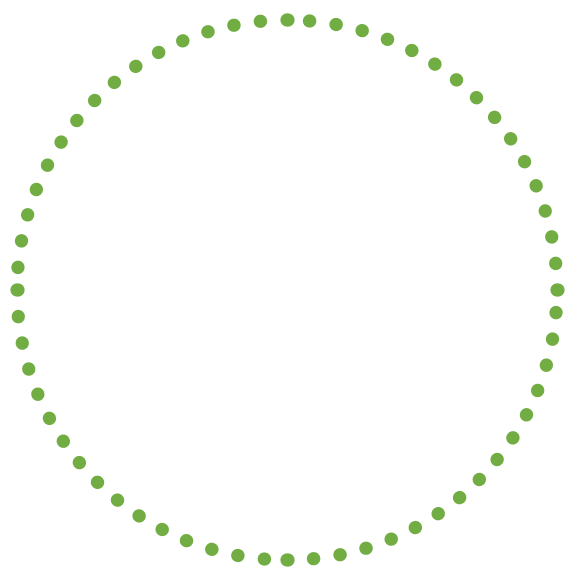
Because we care about our sense of connectedness, we will not shy away from anything that can inform our own journey. We will look at how social bonds have been modeled to us— not to judge our role models, but to grow ourselves. Their journey is theirs, and we leave that with them for now; but ours is ours and we will take the initiative to expand ourselves. And so now step into a place where you can see others, without criticizing them, in order to better see yourself. For that is what you want.

### Exercise:

1. Today, in your safe place, with your journal, begin by reading these opening sentences out loud so that you can hear them.

***“I am a woman with the capacity to love, learn, grow, and expand. One of the ways I am choosing to do that is by remembering what I have learned from others. I don't need to place value statements on anything right now, judging what is bad and what is good. For I can learn from all things. I choose to remember that which can serve my journey in any way, even if I can't see how right now. I trust that I will grow.”***

2. On the next page write your name in the middle circle. Next, make a circle somewhere on the page with the words “my mom” inside it. Then around that circle, write any words, memories, phrases, or statements that come to mind about your mom and her social circle and relational bonds. Step into a stream of consciousness where you simply write down anything and everything in short bursts, a live stream, with no need to edit or articulate it any differently than how it pops into your head. Take all the time you need here before moving on to the next paragraph. If words immediately start coming, go with that. If it is helpful, feel free to use any of the following questions to assist the process: What do you remember seeing about how she interacted with people? Did she have lots of girlfriends or none? Maybe a few names of her friends come to mind? What kind of a friend was she to others? How important was her social community to her? What was her focus? What did she give? Who was she as a friend? What adjectives come to mind?
3. Next, think about who else influenced you or modeled (for better or for worse) relationships and friendships to you? Write their names in circles around the page. Choose at least a few of these names and repeat the process above. Allow your stream of consciousness to add words, memories, images, and phrases around different names on the page. What jumps out at you about each person? What do you recall when you ask yourself about what kind of a friend these individuals were? How intentional were they in developing their circle of friends? What did you witness?
4. When you have completed your remembering, re-circle your own name in the middle and in doing so say, ***“I am who I am. I am grateful for what was modeled to me so I can learn and grow from all of it.”***



## Day 5: Acknowledging the Myths

The first chapter of ***Friendships Don't Just Happen!*** highlights four misunderstandings, or myths, that can prevent us from moving forward in our friendships.

Many of us believe these four statements, even if they aren't true:

1. Friendship should happen automatically, like they did when we were kids.
2. The really good friendships should last forever.
3. Not having the right friendships right now reflects poorly on me.
4. When I find the right person, it should be obvious and feel easy to become friends.

### Exercise:

Go back and skim pages 10–17 for longer discussions of each of these myths, which we often take with us through life.

Now, on the next page I've turned each misunderstanding into a friendship truth. To implant the truth in our memories, follow the directions to write illustrations of occasions when you've experienced this reality. It's important for our brains to recall the evidence of times in our lives when those myths weren't true.

When you've completed your journaling, end by saying: ***"I choose to see things differently."***

**Truth #1: Friendships are developed.**

Write an example of when this has been true for you. Name any friend and think through what activities and events actually led to your becoming friends (scheduling appointments, emailing, listening, etc.).

**Truth #2: Friendships come-and-go, ebb-and-flow.**

Write an example of when this has been true for you. Name any friendship that really mattered to you and still didn't last forever, and/or a friendship that you have picked back up in a meaningful way after some time and/or distance.

**Truth #3: Needing new friends is normal at many times in our lives.**

Write an example of when this has been true for you. List all the times in your life when, through no shame/blame/fault of your own, you've been in a space where you needed new friends (after a move, after a life change by you or someone else).

**Truth #4: Just liking each other doesn't make us friends.**

Write an example of when this has been true for you. Recall the names of a couple of women you've liked over the years that you wished you could have become friends with but didn't, because you never spent consistent time together.

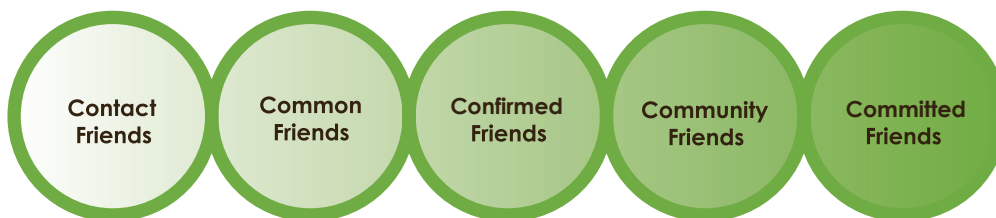
## Day 6: Defining Our Circles

As discussed in Chapter 2 of *Friendships Don't Just Happen!*, "Shasta's Circles of Connectedness" help us see which kinds of friends most need our attention as we seek relational fulfillment.

### Shasta's Circles of Connectedness

The friendship continuum begins on the left with the most casual of friends and moves to the right as the bond and commitment deepens. While there are some parameters to each circle, how we categorize our friends is subjective, based on our own sense of the bond between us. That bond is based primarily on intimacy and regularity.

### Shasta's Circles of Connectedness



**Contact Friends:** We are friendly whenever we see them, but we don't see them much outside of our shared context. We are linked to them because we share something in common—we attend the same church, went to school together, both know the same mutual friend, or play together on a local sports team. Contact Friends are not the same as "all acquaintances," though. While we may know the names of all twenty people in our association meeting or at church, our Contact Friends are the 2 or 3 that we gravitate to when we see them in that context.

**Common Friends:** We intentionally spend time with these friends, getting to know them more, but our friendship is still based primarily on one shared commonality. The bond can develop because we see each other in a weekly moms' group, are working on a shared project, sing in the same choir, or belong to the same club, or because we are frequently in the same social circle. But we are more than Contact Friends because we are initiating time together, having long conversations, and seeing each other on purpose.

Confirmed Friends is next on the continuum, and I'll return to this Circle in a minute. There are two things that change when we cross the center Circle: (1) the **regularity** with which we spend time together and (2) the **broadening and deepening** of what we share together.

**Community Friends:** With Community Friends we intentionally spend regular time together outside the area we have in common. With Community Friends we have crossed the lines of our original relationship boundaries, and now it feels normal to invite them to a concert on short notice, check in with them about their weekend plans, or see if they are interested in starting a book club with us. This is where a "work friend" turns into a "friend outside of work," too. If one of us changed jobs, we'd still have other structures in place to support our friendship. We are likely meeting important people in their lives and revealing life stories about things other than the original bonding subject.

**Commitment Friends:** We intimately and consistently share our lives with each other; our commitment extends beyond the things that hold us in common. This far-right Circle is reserved for the best friends we regularly share our feelings with and whose lives we're involved in in meaningful ways. We may have bonded as Common Friends because of our kids or at work, but these are now the friends we are most committed to. They could switch jobs, get married, change interests, or move away, but we would still be in each other's lives. These are the women we will sacrifice for and love through any crisis.

Now, go back to the middle:

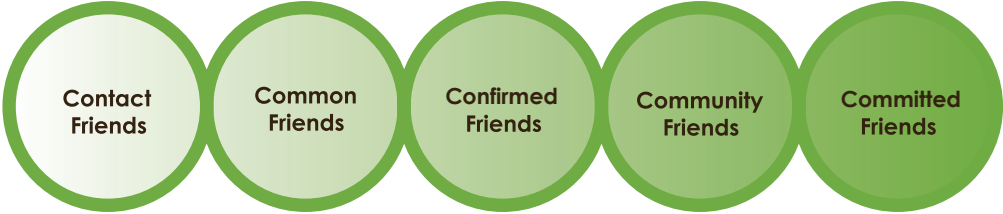
**Confirmed Friends:** We share a history with these friends that has bonded us, but our connection is not regular anymore. These are the friends that we used to live close to and love deeply, but now only talk to occasionally. This middle Circle is reserved for the friends we have a deep connection with. At one point we would have placed them on the right side of the continuum—but we no longer have the regular contact with them that we do with our Commitment Friends. They are not engaged in our day-to-day lives and in the creation of new memories together. But these are the women we know we can pick up with where we left off, although our commonality is now more in the past than it is in the present.

### Exercise:

1. Write the names of all your current friends along the continuum. Take the first name that comes into your head and ask yourself, "Where does this person fit on this continuum right now based on the relationship we currently share?"
2. When you've finished, say, **"I'm grateful for the friends I have right now, no matter what Circle they are in."**

Note: It may be helpful to skim pages 33–39 in ***Friendships Don't Just Happen!*** to remind you of the 4 tips to keep in mind when placing names in specific Circles.





## Day 7: Evaluating Our Circles

Today we're building upon yesterday's exercise.

Answer the following questions based on what you see when you look at your own Circles of Connectedness surrounded by the names of people you know.

1. What surprised you as you wrote the names of your friends?
2. Which Circle(s) do you want to celebrate for how meaningful/full/strong it is right now?
3. Which Circle(s) do you wish were fuller/stronger/more meaningful?
4. Which Circle is the hardest for you to develop? Why do you think that is?
5. What other observations or insights do you have as you look at your continuum?

For each Circle, finish the sentence "In this Circle I most desire..." Whether it involves numbers, names, qualities, or anything else. Simply capture what you most hope for in that area. What do you think you need? What do you want for that category?

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Common: \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmed: \_\_\_\_\_

Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment: \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, place your hand on your continuum and end with this affirmation:

***"I look forward to engaging in more meaningful relationships."***

## Day 8: Articulating My Need

When we don't foster friendships, it's not because we don't value them; rather, the prospect or the process of it somehow drains us more than it energizes us.

It is crucial for us to be strategic in how we give, and to whom. For example, many women spend so much time giving to all the people they know on the left side of Shasta's Circles of Connectedness—keeping in touch with everyone, organizing club meetings, baking for this-and-that, and doing favors for everyone—that they tell me they don't have the time or energy to add more friends to their lives. And yet they feel unfulfilled and lonely because they don't have the friendships they crave and need on the right side of the friendship continuum.

The reverse can be true too.

In Chapter 3 of *Friendships Don't Just Happen!*, there are 4 different imbalances, or friendship needs (pages 50–57), that we can experience at different times in our lives:

- Need **deeper** friends (right side low)
- Need **more** friends (low on both ends of the continuum)
- Need **current** friends (middle Circle imbalance)
- Need **specific** friends (right side full)

Our goal is to have the right people, in the right places, in every Circle. We want to be relationally healthy—developing and fostering our friendships to be vibrant across the continuum of friendship, from left to right.

## Exercise:

Today, I want you to look at the four needs and pick the one that most fits your life right now:

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Now, answer these questions:

1. If I were to look back over my life, is this the same need that shows up most often? If so, why is that? If not, which one is most familiar to me, and why is it different now?
2. How do I think personality contributes to making this my need?
3. How do my current circumstances contribute to this need?
4. How do I feel about this being my current need?
5. What, if anything, do I want to do in response to this being my current need?

End with this statement of gratitude: ***"I am so grateful to know my need. This will serve me!"***

## Day 9: Inviting Our Joy

We want to be happy.

A study by James Fowler of UC San Diego and Nicholas Christakis of Harvard Medical School found that the quality of our relationships is more significant in our lives than the quantity. Their research showed that, on average, every **happy** friend increases your own chance of being happy by 9 percent. Each **unhappy** friend decreases it by 7 percent.

Today, take responsibility for being one of the happy friends for those in your life. Sometimes in our loneliness, we can become bitter, skeptical, defensive, or bad-tempered. But we know that happy people attract happy people, and happy people help increase the happiness of others. If you seek our own personal happiness and joy, know that it will serve you, personally and relationally.

We can't wave a magic wand and change our circumstances or make ourselves happy, but we can identify what makes us happy and invite it into our lives.

### Exercise:

You are going to create a Joy Collage today. It will be fun, and you don't need to worry about what it actually looks like—it matters more what it feels like. I want you to create a collage of all that helps you feel joy and happiness. With your colored pencils, crayons or markers, and magazine cuttings, create a page with words and images that fill you with joy.

On the following page, surround the phrase "I invite joy..." with all things that fill your tank of joy. Write words, draw symbols, and cut out pictures to create a collage of things that energize you. What activities, moments, conversations, people, and words lighten your load, move you forward, and give you peace and joy? What makes you smile? What gives you hope? What inspires you?

When you're all done, end with this prayer: ***"I invite joy into my relational journey. I want this joy to fuel me in my relationships."***

I invite  
joy...

## Day 10: Reflecting on Frientimacy

In ***Friendships Don't Just Happen!*** I coin the word Frientimacy—Friendship Intimacy—and use it repeatedly.

Frientimacy is the deepest level of friendship we can experience with someone. To have intimacy means feeling complete safety in our vulnerability with someone else. It's the stage we often crave when we think about wanting a best friend, and yet we often neglect to remember that not only is it not an instant experience, neither is it without conflict and awkwardness.

Before we can experience Frientimacy, first we have to develop a relationship through 4 prior stages:

1. Curiosity
2. Exploration
3. Familiarity
4. Vulnerability
5. Frientimacy

### Exercise:

Answer the following questions.

1. Which stage do you think is hardest for most people? Why?
2. Is that the same stage that is hardest for you? Why or why not?
3. In Chapter 4, in the section where I define Frientimacy, I say this on page 60:

*"I'm struck by how often we all say we want BFF's—Committed Friends—and yet how little we seem to understand what that means. We romanticize the stories, almost more than we do in romance...."*

On the next page I continue:

*"We don't get there [Frientimacy] without awkwardness, hurt feelings, and pain. Those things are part of life, and if you want the quintessential friend who is "always there for you," then that means showing up for each other when you're both at your worst. Which also happens to be when you're the messiest, the most needy, and the least impressive."*

How do you feel when you read those statements? (Scared? Vulnerable? Sad? Indignant?)

4. In your most honest voice, what is one thing that keeps you from experiencing more Frientimacy in your life?



## Day 11: Being Open

Chapter 5 of *Friendships Don't Just Happen!* is about being more open to potential friendships. This includes being less judgmental, showing up with a more hopeful attitude, fishing with a net instead of a line, and remembering that the things we think we have to have in common with others aren't always what will determine the strength of our bond.

On pages 76–78, I discuss research that has found that it matters less **what** we have in common with each other than that we **discover** what we have in common with each other. In other words, the quantity of several small commonalities will more strongly predict our attraction than us having one commonality that seems really big and important to us.

I find this fascinating as it's so easy to think that our friends need to have our same religious background, political views, ethnicity, or relationship status when, in fact, we actually have bonded with many people over the years who don't fit these requirements.

### Exercise:

Today, think of one friend you've had that proves that point. Who have you grown close to that surprised you (e.g., from work, in your family, a former roommate)? Perhaps someone who seemed almost your opposite in some big area? Maybe you had a 20-year age difference, came from completely different places, or were at different life stages? The point is, think of an example of someone you've bonded with even though you didn't have some of the "obvious" things in common.

On the following page, write her name at the top of the page. Then, in the left column, list everything you can think of that you didn't seem to have in common. In the right column, list the commonalities you discovered in each other. It's powerful for our brains to remember these stories! This exercise will remind you that you can always find bonds with people, even if they aren't obvious immediately.

End with this gratitude: ***"How blessed I have been by all the different people I have known and loved!"***



## Day 12: Fostering Our Relationships

Knowing what needs to be present in relationships to foster depth, trust, and intimacy helps us as we build new relationships, repair broken ones, foster deeper ones, and recognize when to end a relationship or simply to acknowledge what it is and not call it a friendship.

A definition of friendship that I have grown fond of comes from the scientific mind of Dr. Paul Dobransky, a board-certified psychiatrist and the sex-and-dating columnist for *Maximum Fitness* magazine. I talk about it on pages 122–123 of ***Friendships Don't Just Happen!*** and describe each word within the definition (see below), and then in greater depth in the three chapters titled: "Initiating Consistency," "Adding Positivity," and "Increasing Vulnerability."

### Definition: "Friendship is consistent, mutual, shared positive emotion"

Before unpacking briefly what this definition says, let me point out what it does not say: it does not suggest **who** you will be attracted to (interests, temperaments, age, similarities); rather it provides the **how**—which is critical because in actuality you can be good friends with someone who is opposite from you or in a different life stage, etc., but you cannot be good friends without having these four qualities present:

**Consistency:** You will not become close friends with someone unless you have regular contact. You can have amazing energy and really like each other, but if you can't get something scheduled, keep postponing or rescheduling, or simply say "we should definitely get together sometime," a friendship it will not become. You cannot move someone from the left side of the 5 Circles of Connectedness to the right without consistent time together. Period.

**Mutuality:** This speaks primarily to the fact that both people need to view the relationship as a friendship for it to truly develop. A relationship that isn't mutual is one in which someone needs it for networking, information, listening, advice, parenting, money, time etc. more than the other. In other words, the participants need to give and receive equally, and both people need to consider it a friendship, not just one of them. You can feel close to someone—your coach, your pastor, your parent, your therapist, your boss—and that doesn't negate the significance that person can play in your life; but if it's not mutual, then it's not a friendship.

**Sharing:** This speaks primarily to what is discussed and shared. Are your conversations staying vague? Or are they deep but only in one area? For a friendship to grow—sharing, wide and deep, must happen on both sides. To cross onto the right side of the 5 Circles of Connectedness, both of you must be sharing outside the area that you have in common.

**Positive Emotion:** If you don't experience positive emotions when you're together, you don't have a friendship. If you always leave feeling worse about yourself and life, feeling drained, or experiencing more negative emotions than when you arrived (whether it be guilt, anger or pity), this is not a friendship. You can stay in the relationship because you want to be of service, or because it's your ministry, or because she needs you and you have extra to give, or because you're committed to staying present—but call it what it is: it's not a friendship.

**Exercise:**

1. Look back on Day 6, when you wrote down names around Shasta's Circles of Connectedness. On this page, write the names you have on the right side of the continuum—in the Community and Committed Circles. (If you don't have very many names there, write the names of women you'd like to develop friendships with.)

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2. Next to each name, jot down some notes in answer to the following questions:

- Does my relationship with this person exhibit all 4 of these qualities? (Consistency, Mutuality, Sharing, Positive Emotion)
- If not, which one(s) would I need to foster in order to strengthen our friendship?

3. After completing this exercise: What did you learn? What insights jumped out at you? Was there a pattern to which quality is needed most in your relationships?

To end, commit to yourself: ***"I'm excited about fostering healthy friendships."***

## Day 13: Facing Insecurities

I start Chapter 6 by claiming that it's usually lack of momentum that prevents friendships from developing beyond left-side friends. We can both like each other, but not be able, for whatever reasons, to schedule enough time together to really form a bond.

Our reasons may sound varied (and valid), but they often come down to two things: insecurities and priorities.

Today, let's look at insecurities.

### Exercise:

1. Before we go there, I want to invite you to do some deep breathing. Breath has a powerful way of connecting us to our bodies, hearts, and minds. When we focus on breathing, we automatically start feeling safer, more grounded, and more in-alignment. So breathe in willingness and breathe out judgment. Breathe in expansiveness and breathe out anything that feels constrictive. Breathe in honesty and breathe out any defensiveness. Keep breathing deeply until you feel ready.
2. Now, go back and re-read pages 109–112, where I describe Securely-Attached Adults, Anxious-Preoccupied Adults, Dismissive-Avoidant Adults, and Fearful-Avoidant Adults. Do so without defensiveness and with a desire to really see yourself and your patterns. (Even those of us who are Securely-Attached Adults will recognize that we can behave in ways that match the other descriptions when our insecurities are triggered.)
3. After one more deep breath, answer the following questions on the next page.

1. Which description fits you “most of the time” in your female friendships?
2. What **circumstances or events** seem to trigger the least healthy and least confident responses from you? (For example, when you're the center of attention, when you're not the center of attention, at networking events, at weddings, when you're being evaluated)
3. What **places** seem to trigger the least healthy and least confident responses from you? (For example, your boss's office, your parents' home, big rooms filled with strangers, quiet and intimate places)
4. What **types of people** (or specific people) seem to trigger the least healthy and least confident responses from you? (For example, people who are more “successful” than you, younger than you, thinner than you, or richer than you, people who talk too much)

End today with this desire: ***“I want to live with confidence and genuine respect for myself and others. I am committed to observing these things in me without judgment, but with a desire to grow.”***

## Day 14: Admitting Our Energy

I don't know about you, but most of us experience some sort of anxiety around our relationships.

This is quite normal! Even those of us who are extroverts (meaning that we receive energy from being around people), find certain settings more stressful or less meaningful than others. Certainly our temperaments can affect how we form friendships and what we find meaningful, but people of all temperaments have successful relationships. It can be helpful, though, to identify what is meaningful to each of us, and what causes us stress so that we can respond with intention.

Today we are going to look at different scenarios and groups of people and place them in a chart in order to facilitate our own observations and insights.

### Exercise:

1. See the boxes on the following page? The top left box is for **activities that are meaningful and low-anxiety**; the top right box is for **activities that are not so meaningful and low-anxiety**. The bottom left box is for **activities that are meaningful and high-anxiety**; the bottom right box is for **activities that are not so meaningful and high-anxiety**.
2. Now, place these words/phrases listed below into the box that rings most true for you, most of the time. Go with your first impulse—don't second-guess, rationalize, or try to talk yourself into feeling differently. Simply place them in the box that feels honest.
3. Customize the list: Add any categories that speak to your life—maybe specific names of people, categories of people you interact with (in clubs, organizations), scenarios you often face, etc.

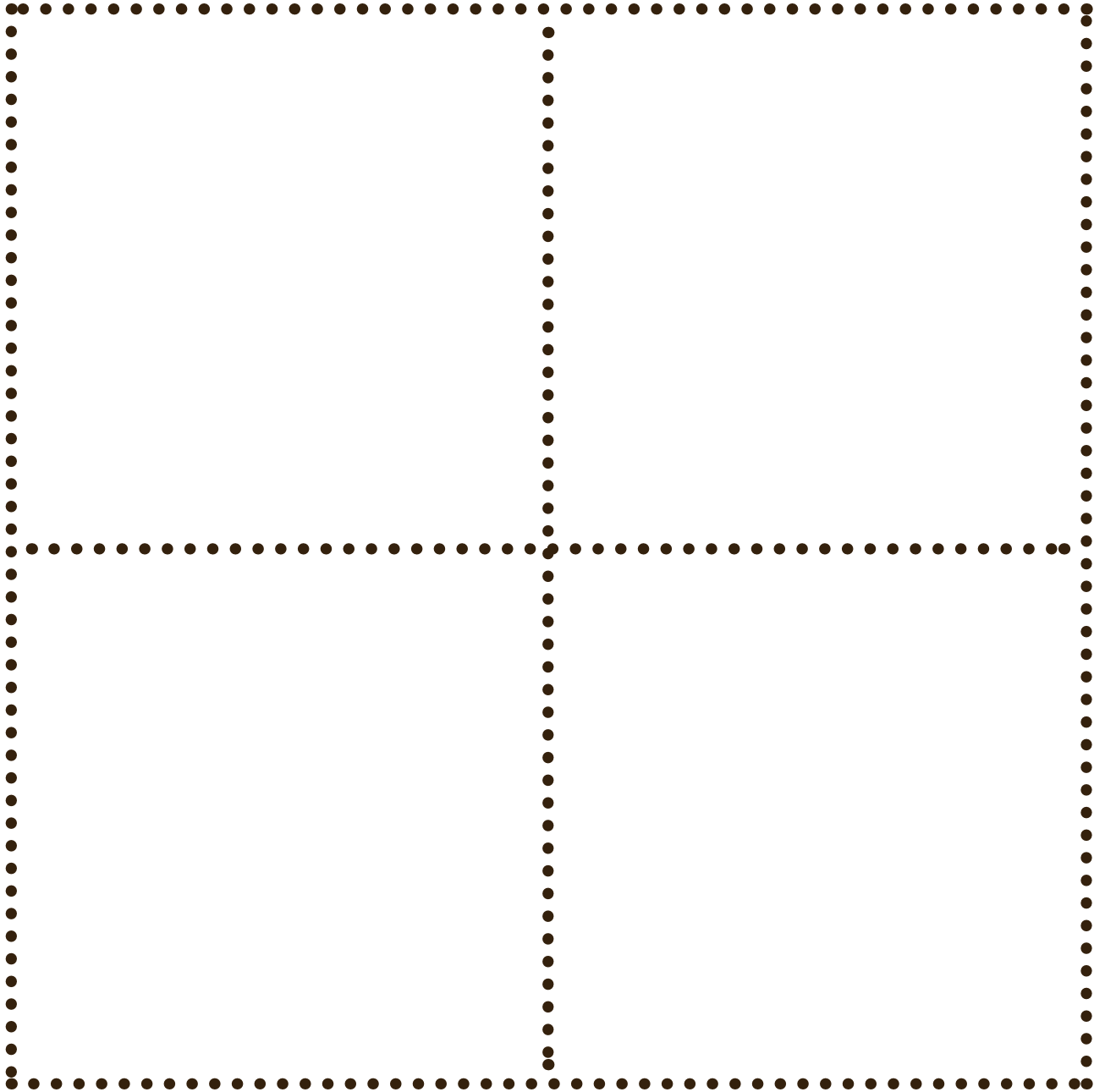
Acts of service/tasks	Initiating contact	Sharing ideas, opinions
Being center of attention	Large parties	Sharing personal things
Childhood/school friends	Meeting people for first time	Sharing trivia, news, facts
Church community	Networking events	Showing up on time
Email contact	One-on-one time	Small dinner parties
Face-to-face time	One-time events	Small groups
Facebook interaction	People different from me	Spontaneous events
Family (or specific members)	People just like me	Time focused on activity
Girls' night out	Phone calls	Time focused on talking
Giving/receiving gifts	Physical touch	Words of affirmation
Hosting or being in charge	Events planned in advance	Work relationships
Husband/boyfriend	Recurring events	Quality time

Meaningful

Not So Meaningful

Low Anxiety

High Anxiety





When you're done placing all the words in the appropriate boxes, make some observations:

1. What surprises me? What doesn't surprise me?
2. How much of my life am I living in the **Meaningful** column? What could I do, if anything, to move more things to that column?
3. How much of my life is filled with anxiety? What parts of this do I have control over? What could I do, if anything, to reduce the number of items in the Anxiety row?
4. What other observations do I have or insights I can glean from this?

To end, look at those four boxes, smile, and say with conviction: **"I am who I am. I value me."**

## Day 15: Honoring Our Priorities

Today we're looking at our priorities. Obviously, having made the time to stay on this journey, you are willing to put our time and energy toward your friendships. They matter to you. We know that we cannot foster meaningful friendships without saying "yes" to more moments with people and "no" to the things that can distract us.

On page 117 of ***Friendships Don't Just Happen!***, I write, "Priority means choosing something over something else."

But prioritizing can be more complicated than simply listing our priorities. Just because family comes first, doesn't mean it should come first in every situation. Nor does it mean we give up sleep, health, relaxing, or other valuable things in order to engage in friendship. But it does mean that we invariably have to make decisions to prioritize time with people over other things that will sometimes sound easier, more comfortable, more fulfilling, or even more urgent.

Today, let's try to build awareness around how to better prioritize our friendships.

### Exercise:

1. Answer the questions on the following page.
2. When completed, end with this affirmation: ***"I'm doing my best. Friendships matter to me and I'll figure it out."***

1. How many hours a week do you think you spend on friendship-building activities?
  
2. What do you think is the ideal number of hours to dedicate to friendship-building activities? (The number you feel it would take to foster the friendships you say matter to you?)
  
3. What is the difference between those two numbers? How does that make you feel?
  
4. There are at least two ways to close the gap between the numbers. One is to increase the hours you spend on friendship-building to what you think is ideal (cutting out other things); the other is to maximize the hours you spend which can theoretically decrease the number of hours you need to spend.
  - Let's start with the latter. Look back at yesterday's assignment and see where you're spending time that isn't meaningful. (*For example, could one hour less a week on Facebook leave you time to grab a drink for an hour after work with a friend?*) Try to identify the relational activities that could make the most of your time, possibly accomplishing more with less.
    - Ideas:
  
  - Now, let's look at whether you have any **extra** hours that you give to other things that you could maybe give to friendships that matter to you. Where are 2 or 3 places where you "could" choose to find some extra time? (*For example, not putting the kids to bed one night a week? Not watching TV one night a week? Combining exercise with a friend one day a week? Leaving work on time one night a week?*)
    - Ideas:
  
5. Any insights or actions you want to take-away from today?

## Day 16: Fostering Our Gratitude

Perhaps you've noticed that the word grateful has consistently been present on this journey...

We don't want to be people who become bitter from our wounds. We don't want to establish beliefs that paralyze us. We don't want to let fear guide our decisions. We don't want to prevent intimacy with others because of our insecurities. One of the ways we foster the spirit of life inside of us is through the practice of gratitude.

In fact, friendship is centered in positivity! Chapter 9 talks about how we must show up in our friendships with joy and positivity. And our ability to do that is deeply rooted in our ability to be grateful.

Today we are withholding judgment, shame, criticism, hurt, embarrassment and any other negative feeling that might emerge. Those feelings are real and we acknowledge that. Gratitude doesn't minimize hurt or deny pain. It isn't an either/or; it's a both/and. We have unmet expectations AND we will express gratitude that we can hope. We acknowledge that we have limiting beliefs AND we are grateful to be aware of them. We have been disappointed AND we have received joy we didn't expect.

We aren't looking the other way, trying to ignore the trials and disappointments; rather, we are looking through them, choosing to still see life with gratitude.

### Exercise:

Sit quietly for a moment before beginning today's exercise. Look around you. Notice where you are. Be present. Affirm: "I am grateful to have this place and time."

And then, whatever your eyes fall on, use that item to make a statement of gratitude. For example, if I see my books I might say, "I am grateful to know how to read," or "I am grateful for the wisdom so many authors are sharing." What do you see? Find at least ten things around you that trigger gratitude in your mind before moving on.

Now, go back through the exercises you've completed over the last 15 days, continuing the practice of making statements of gratitude. Simply let your eyes sweep over the pages, landing on different memories, beliefs, and snapshots of your journey. As something registers, your only assignment is to create a statement of gratitude.

*For example: "I am grateful I learned x about myself," or "I am grateful for so-and-so because..." or "I am grateful for the decision I made to..."*

Write as many expressions of gratitude as you can. Fill the next page with as much gratitude as you can. It should almost be a summary of your learnings, insights, and inspirations over the last two weeks.

I am  
**grateful** for...

## Day 17: Honoring Our Energy

We only have so much energy. It's a commodity. And today we're going to look at **how** and **where** we spend that energy in our relationships.

On the following page is a chart called My Relational Energy that I want you to fill out. A couple activities back you said how many hours a week you wanted to dedicate to friendships. For the sake of illustration, let's just say that number equals **your** 100% of what you think you can give each week.

I'm going to ask you to divvy up your relational energy among the five Circles on the left side of the page. Note that during this exercise you are acknowledging the importance of each category to you, the priority you want to give it.

### Exercise:

1. Start with the Ideal.

Let's assume you have 100% of your relational energy available (the time and energy that you have in your life to spend fostering community and relationships). In the "Ideal" column, decide how you would ideally distribute your time among the 5 Circles. Your numbers should add up to 100. Is it important to you to give more energy to one Circle than to another, or do they all get equal amounts of you? Ideally, would you spend more time on the left side or the right side? How much time/energy will you give those Confirmed Friends compared to your Commitment Friends? What is your ideal distribution of your relational energy? Which categories matter the most to you? Who gets the most of you?

2. Next, go to the Reality column.

Again, divide up your 100 points of energy, except this time acknowledge how you think it's currently distributed among those Circles. Be brutally honest. Is there a Circle that is empty or close to it? Are you at a place in life where you are giving way more than you think is ideal to the people in one Circle? Where is your energy currently going?

3. Next, go to the Moving Toward column.

Use this column to help you figure out how to distribute your energy ideally. Start by identifying the difference between your Reality and your Ideal. For example, if you ultimately want to spend more time with Commitment Friends but you don't have very many right now, which Circle do you need to temporarily increase in order to eventually build up the Commitment Friends Circle? Which Circles will you borrow from temporarily to help you reach your Ideal goals?

4. And finally, let's assume that some of the time we are stretched. I call this the When Stretched column.

Sometimes we simply we don't have 100% of our resources to give. Let's just say we only have 70% to give this month. So where will you cut back "when stretched" and don't have that 30% to give? Do all Circles get shaved equally in your ideal world, or do 1 or 2 Circles pay the price? Write the numbers that represent your "relational energy" when it can only add up to 70.

## My Relational Energy

	Ideal	Reality	Moving Toward	When Stretched
Contact				
Common				
Confirmed				
Community				
Commitment				

5. Before ending, take a moment to write down 2 or 3 observations that strike you as you look at this chart.

6. To end, simply breath in and say **"I will"** and breathe out and say **"Honor my energy."** Do this five times.

## Day 18: Trusting our Wisdom

You have been honest. You have been present. You have been real. In this moment, you can hold your sense of connectedness with an open hand as it grows and expands. I invite you to trust. To believe. To have faith.

Today's exercise may be one of the most difficult, as well as a little awkward. But awkwardness doesn't mean unhelpful. Believing that what we want is possible is called faith, and it's a huge piece of embracing our preferred future. Please step into this place today with a willingness to experiment and receive, even through doubts and questions.

You are going to have a dialogue in which you write both sides of the conversation—your own, and that of the voice inside you, your trusted source. We all have a voice that we can access and learn from. We might have different names for this source we trust: God, Universe, Soul, Higher Self, Divine Spirit, Guide, Guardian Angel, Intuition, Voice of Reason, and others.

We are frequently much more practiced at talking to this voice than we are at listening to it. So, today we will hope to hear. This is a powerful opportunity to invite into your life the wisdom that is within you, but that you may never have accessed. This can be a beautiful process that simply gives your soul the chance to listen. Have faith, step into this process, and believe that there's a chance you will hear something that speaks to you.

The conversation you create will look like a script. Write your name followed by a colon, and then write down your first question. Next, write the name of your Trusted Source followed by a colon, and then write down the response. Continue this pattern throughout the exercise. If you don't know the name of your trusted source, then that will be the first question you write down: "What do you want to be called?" so that you have a name to converse with.

Note: Don't worry if you doubt that it's your voice or really the voice of your Trusted Source; just write whatever comes into your mind. Just allow yourself to ask questions and receive answers. You can judge the content later; this is not that time. It may take a few moments to get into it; allow yourself that. Simply consider yourself a scribe taking down the internal conversation you hear. Interview your trusted source (using whatever name you have decided to call it), question it, and thank it.

Here are some questions to get you started, but you are welcome to interact in any way that is meaningful to you. Here are some possible questions to ask, listening in faith for the authentic answers:

1. How have you seen me expanding as I engage in activities of connectedness, community, and friendship?
2. What is the best thing I bring to my relationships? What is the blessing I offer?
3. Where have you seen me live that out?
4. Which of the 5 Circles of Connectedness do I most need to focus on right now to invite more relational fulfillment into my life?
5. What do you think holds me back from having the community I long for?
6. What effect does that have on my relationships?



7. Is there anything about my current relationships that I need to acknowledge that you don't think I have?
8. In what ways are you guiding me and supporting me in this process right now?

When you are completely finished, be sure to thank your trusted source, expressing your gratitude. Take a moment to record what you felt as you listened.

And then simply nod your head and say, ***"I am grateful for anything I heard that will deepen my faith and expand my journey."*** Close your journal and walk away in peace.

my **Dialogue**  
with my  
**Trusted Source**

## Day 19: Practicing Forgiveness

On page 170 of ***Friendships Don't Just Happen!*** I say this about forgiveness:

*"Beyond the common issues we all struggle with on the subject of forgiveness, such as understanding what it is, what it isn't, what it really does, and how to do it, is the fact that with most friendships we don't readily admit it's needed as often as it is."*

Today, make sure you're present in this moment and ready to engage. Take some deep breaths and whisper your willingness: ***"I'm ready to have things revealed to me."***

Start by naming the people closest to you that you don't think you necessarily need to forgive.

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Now, for each name, think of one thing that you're **willing** to "forgive" each person for.

You're undoubtedly confused because I just had you name people you didn't need to forgive and now I'm asking you to forgive them for something! In fact, there is always something we are forgiving in each other—so try to name just one thing for each person. Re-reading Chapter 10 "Practicing Forgiveness" might be helpful. We're not looking for wrong-doings as much as we're looking for where there is some angst or a twinge of resentment.

*Examples: I forgive her for being married to a wonderful guy. I forgive her for having so much money/being so thin/getting promoted. I forgive her for being obsessed with her kids. I forgive her for raising her kids differently than I am. I forgive her for not calling me as much as I'd like. I forgive her for forgetting my birthday. I forgive her for being scatter-brained. I forgive her for telling long and boring stories.*

Are you getting the hang of it? Now, by each person's name, write a specific statement of forgiveness.

Can you think of someone that you currently feel mad at? Write her name down and go re-read pages 180–182; then come back here and jot down any ideas, insights, or observations about what you read. And, if you want to do something about how you feel, what is it?

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End today with: ***“My only way to feel peace is to forgive. I will keep practicing it!”***



## Day 20: Identifying Our Responsibility

Growth is a funny thing. Sometimes we can choose to step into it, and other times we only get to respond to it.

Today, you're going to determine what you think you can do something about and what you think is beyond your control. In each desire in life it seems that we're asked to do our part, but it also seems that there is always an element that cannot be coerced, managed, or manipulated.

### Exercise:

1. Let's start and end with the Serenity Prayer, made famous by 12-step programs but applicable to all walks of life:

**"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."**

2. Now, go back to Day 2 of your journey, where you identified all of your relational wants (and feel free to add others that have emerged since then). We're ultimately going to pick a handful of them that really matter to you and on the next page you'll identify what part of each want is your responsibility (within your control) and which part is beyond your control, out of your hands.

For example, you can decide to confront someone, but you cannot control their response. You can decide to invite someone to dinner, but you can't control whether they accept. You can decide to go on a date, but you can't control whether you'll have chemistry.

Avoid simply categorizing: "These are the things I can control" and "These are the ones I cannot," since sometimes the outcome won't be that black-and-white. Frequently, our wants have elements we can act on and elements that we simply have to wait for or rely on others for. The wisdom you need today is to see both possibilities.

So, breathe deeply, start with the wants that matter the most to you. For each perceived want, think of what you **could** do to move forward on that want, and then identify what part of it is out of your control.

3. When you have completed this for the wants that matter most to you, take a moment to record any insights you took from your own journey and how you felt through the process.
4. End today by again reciting the Serenity Prayer: **"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."**

Relational Want #1: \_\_\_\_\_

What parts can I do something about?

What parts are beyond my control?

Relational Want #2: \_\_\_\_\_

What parts can I do something about?

What parts are beyond my control?

Relational Want #3: \_\_\_\_\_

What parts can I do something about?

What parts are beyond my control?

Relational Want #4: \_\_\_\_\_

What parts can I do something about?

What parts are beyond my control?

## Day 21: Embracing Our Growth

By stepping into these exercises you have shifted your thinking. You have grown in some ways that you can see and feel, but also in other ways that will still unfold as your intentions begin to manifest.

Often we say we don't have time or energy for friendships, but you have proven that you do. You have chosen to step into increased awareness, and by doing so you have expanded your vision, your hunger, and your resources.

You have worked really hard. Sometimes it hurt, felt uncomfortable, or surprised you. Thank yourself for that. You aren't afraid of growth. Today, in this last exercise, you are going to let your journal catch up with your heart. You are going to acknowledge some of the shifts you've experienced, some of the truths you will want to hold, and some of the "take-aways" you want to act on. Embrace what might inform and fuel you in your journey forward.

Today, I want you to capture snapshots of the journey that you don't want to forget. We are going to bring to one place some of the revelations and insights that you want to retain.

### Exercise:

1. Start on Day 1 of your journal and simply let your eyes fall across the page, asking yourself any of these questions: "What is my take-away from this day?" or "What do I want to remember from this day?" or "What did I hear or receive that will serve me?" or "What do I want to do because of this day?"
2. For each one that you find, write **one** sentence on the following page. Here are some sentence prompts as examples: "I will remember..., I heard..., I want..., I will..., My take-away is..., I know..."
3. Go page-by-page through all the days of your journey to compile your list. Some days may produce more than one. And if one day didn't have anything for you, then just accept that and move on. The list you end up with should move you, speak to you, and serve you. Your take-away from one day may feel like a summary statement or be a very specific "a-ha", a detail, or quote from your journal.
4. Make your list now. There is no limit to how long the list can be, but limit each entry to one sentence. The result will be something like a vacation photo album, showing highlights of the trip that you don't want to forget.
5. After your list is complete, read through it out loud. You have experienced these things, fostered them, revealed them to yourself, written them, articulated them in statements, and now I want you to hear yourself speak your profound truths with your own heart and ears.
6. Your list as a whole is beautiful and good and speaks value to you. But as you read through it, think about which entries really mattered? As with vacation photos, the album tells the whole story, but there are always a couple of pictures that we love the most and want to frame. Circle three.
7. Now end with the words, **"I have grown and it is beautiful. Thank you."**

Snapshots from  
**My 21 Days**  
that I want to  
**Take with Me:**



It was such an honor to journey with you. Thanks for making this a priority and for showing up each day with a willingness to grow! Having done these exercises with many groups of women I know that everyone hates some days and loves others. I just have to trust that as you reflected and journaled that something of value came up for you, somewhere in these pages.

Should you want to share any piece of your journey with me, I would welcome hearing from you! I can't promise a long response, but I can promise that I read every email that lands in my inbox, and that I will say a little prayer for each one of you. You can email me at [Shasta@GirlFriendCircles.com](mailto:Shasta@GirlFriendCircles.com).

Now, blessings on you as you show up in your relationships with greater awareness and intention.

**Shasta**