**Friends!**

***Where would I be without them?***

Whenever, I have any problem, or even when I don’t, I keep calling my friends, to stay connected with them. Especially when my girls were to get married, I’d call them at all odd times. Since my mother isn’t from this culture, so she has no idea about these things. I trust my friends with all sorts of issues, specially this one. They too are very patient with me, knowing I have no one else to ask. Some things are too silly. Yet they need to be asked, (if you know what I mean.) They know how to guide me because they are in full picture. That is because I’m truthful with them. There are no false airs and graces. Nothing put on for show. We love and respect each other for who and what we are, not for what we could be to them. I suppose it is so important to be truthful with relationships.

If a friend is very rich, she knows, I really care about her, not her wealth. If she didn’t have any wealth too, she would mean the same to me. That is the important thing. No comparisons, no evaluations. The only ingredient is love and respect.

Am I just talking about friends, or all relationships?

I suppose these two ingredients matter in all of our relationships which includes the teacher/student relationship and the mentor one too. As well as the husband/wife relationship.

As a mentor at the Finishing School, besides teaching Interior Design, I had mentoring sessions with young girls (aged 18 to 35). The biggest problem faced was lack of true friends. At the same time, the most well-adjusted ones were those who had good friends. We all need friends, in all shapes. One person cannot fulfill all human needs of ours. So, it is all right to have different friends.

As an only child, I’ve never felt the lack of siblings as I’ve almost always had good friends wherever I went.

 I wonder why?

This morning I was writing something in a book given by Rubina Hasan, my dear friend. In it I was to write friends whom I’ve known for the longest time. The earliest one was the one I still have since the age of nine years, (Shib was six years old then!) We haven’t met for thirty-eight years, (we reconnected last year online, ) we feel the same. It is the same with all my friends. I’m truly blessed.

“Hey, you keep calling me for this problem or that, and you have other friends too, so how do you decide, which one’s advice to take?” Asked Fitrat.

“Well, I only talk to one friend at a time. Based on the friend’s field of expertise, I seek that kind of advice from her, which I know will fit my circumstance too!” So, in this case, I’m only asking you. When it comes to property issues, I’ll talk to my friend Fairy.” Similarly, when it is a religious issue I’ll speak to my friends, Fairy, Seema or my mentor Mahjabeen.

If I just want to laugh and joke, well that includes all of them! – So, I’ll call them one by one, during the month.

So, exactly what is it? How can one have true and good friends? Here are a few points that come to my mind:

1. **Always be your own self with your friend**. Do not put on a false image.
2. **Say exactly what you think**, or keep quiet. Never say something you don’t mean.
3. **Be truthful**. Yes, at all times. Yet, never say anything that may hurt them in any way.
4. **Take also their truth.** If a friend isn’t in a situation to talk to you now, and tells you so. Take it with no hard feelings.
5. **Be there for your friend.** Especially during her hard times. Whatever time the friend needs you, be there for her/him. It maybe night or day, make time.
6. **Build happy memories**: Create occasions to meet, and just have plain fun. Go out for lunch, tea or dinner. Go for drives, movies, and have parties.
7. **Keep a freshness in the relationship**. Any relationship will grow stale if it remains at the same level at which you met. There has to be growth and development in you and your relationship.
8. **Keep your friends’ secrets:** If a friend tells you a thing which is confidential, keep it confidential. Do not ever tell on your friend.
9. **No comparisons:** Each individual is unique, you are, and so is your friend.So, why compare?
10. **Never hold grudges:** It is vital to let bygones be bygones.Also, if something has hurt you, or you find perplexing. Speak out at an appropriate time and place. After that forgive and forget.
11. **Be understanding:** Supposing, I’m living in Islamabad. I find out that my friend came to Islamabad and didn’t even call me, what to say of meeting me. Doesn’t matter. It is okay. If I as a friend cannot understand the simple fact that sometimes, when a person comes for a wedding or some occasion, there is really no time to meet. Then who else can? So, it is all right. It is the same when I go to my friends’ city. She should know, that if there was time, I would have gone over. So, no hard feelings.
12. **Be caring of their family members too:** Give respect and regard to the family members, like husband/wife, children and parents, their other friends.

**With true friends around you, you and I are truly blessed. ☺**