

Buying and Selling Friendship

"Electronic communication is an instantaneous and illusory contact that creates a sense of intimacy without the emotional investment that leads to close friendships." - Clifford Stoll, Silicon Snake Oil

It's not enough that so many relationships at work, at home and at play are disintegrating, losing their connectivity, intimacy and depth of likeability. Now folks have the opportunity to create new relationships, poof!, by buying and selling "friendship." uSocial, an Australian marketing company will save you the time and trouble of creating friendships by "buying" you a few thousand friends and buddies. If you're feeling friendship-deficient, uSocial will help you "buy" friends by the thousand on Facebook for a mere \$200 per thousand! So, need to feel like a somebody by being the friend of someone who's popular, or need to have someone like you, or have no friends, just ante up! Money talks and it says: "buy or sell your friendship!"

What if I don't have \$200?

While many may scoff at the superficiality and inanity of actually buying or selling "friendship," many of us actually do "trade" for friendship, albeit not with money. How so?

Self-sacrificing for friendship

One way many folks cultivate friendship is by doing-doing-doing for others in the hopes of buying their acceptance and approval - their friendship. Even committed and married couples do this with one another. We do this at work with colleagues and bosses, at home with partners, spouses, children and parents, and in the outside world with neighbors and others. We sacrifice our own self, our integrity, our time, even our hopes and dreams to please others so we can feel accepted, loved and "be their friend."

In addition, many even sacrifice their life force so they can be accepted by someone whose "friendship" they feel they desperately need. They'll shun relating to particular co-workers, or bosses, or relatives, for example, in order to be accepted by someone else whose friendship they sorely feel they need. Specific ways people sacrifice their life for others are: putting their plans on hold, doing for others, or owing someone something, out of shame, deferring from making important choices and decisions without first asking their "friend," feeling guilty when making a decision that their "friend" disagrees with, constantly seeking approval, and being in a co-dependent relationship.

Controlling others to garner friendship

One of the most insidious behavior patterns that folks use to "buy" friendship is that of controlling others. For example, do you ever act like a victim, feign an emotional or physical illness, or helplessness so a "friend" will save you or work to "heal" you? Do you ever overtly or covertly threaten to withhold or withdraw your friendship if a "friend" doesn't "do something?" Do you ever say "It's your turn" to take care of you? Do you feel you need a "friend" to consistently complete your activities or tasks because you're too stressed, anxious or overwhelmed? Do you offer friendship as a "reward" your friend earns for doing what you want someone to do for you? On a deeper, abusive level, do you threaten a friend with your own self-destruction to keep their friendship? Do you try to game others' friendship by telling them how essential they are to your life?

Accommodating

Probably the most unconscious and unhealthy way folks seek to gain and keep friends is through accommodating, i.e., doing whatever it takes to please another in order to gain or keep their friendship. We accommodate when we tell others what we think they want to hear, do for others what they want even though such actions or activities might go against our values or moral code. Accommodating is the

most common way folks buy another's friendship, short of paying outright for it, and sometimes we'll actually foot the bill and actually pay whatever it takes to make or keep a friendship.

Why we buy friendship.

The worst solitude is to be destitute of sincere friendship." Sir Francis Bacon

Very early, as infants and very young children, we have a deep need to relate and be related to; we needed contact, warmth, and human relationship. At that time we had the capacity to be our True and Real Self, but our parents and primary caregivers, given their own imperfections and struggles (as all parents and primary caregivers experience as a fact of the human condition) were unable to see and appreciate our True and Real Nature, our True Self. So, we interpreted their "rejection" as meaning: "Being real means the absence of love, warmth, holding and security."

So, in growing up, we learned to pretend, to be like them, to join them in their world the world of illusion, of "lies," the conventional world. As part of the human condition, most of us learn to become what our parents and primary caregivers wanted us to be, focusing on what they paid attention to in us, what they preferred in us, what made them relate to us (as we moved away from, and abandoned, our True and Real Self, our Essential Nature). Thus, we learned to "accommodate" and please them in order to gain their love, acceptance, and approval.

And now as adults, we find ourselves behaving in often self-limiting and self-destructive ways we feel will get us others' love, approval, and acceptance - friendship - even paying \$200 for a thousand "friends."

Authentic friendship is an "inside job"

Essence is a heart and soul quality. Living one's life is not about pleasing others, having a full dance card, or bragging that we have a host of superficial "friends." The foundation of a conscious, healthy and real friendship comes with accessing one's inner confidence, value and worth, not from controlling others, accommodating others or responding to others' controlling behaviors - at work, at home or at play.

The Core Value of Friendship comes deeply from within, not from pleasing or needing others. Allowing one's fears of abandonment, guilt, shame and low self-esteem and then "doing the personal work" to move through our fears and insecurities, to contact and allow our True and Real Self can allow the possibility of being and acting independently, with more confidence and a healthy sense of self-worth and value. This flavor of Friendship arises from contact with our True and Real Self where friendship is defined by quality not quantity.

As Eleanor Roosevelt said, *"Friendship with oneself is all-important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world."* Especially the thousand you can buy for \$200.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- How do you define friendship?
- How would your friends describe your friendship?
- How well do you know your "social network" friends. Really.
- How well do you know your actual real-life friends? Really.
- Do you ever use controlling behaviors to keep a friend?
- Do you ever sacrifice your self, your plans, your energy or accommodate others to keep their friendship?
- Are you ever lonely?
- Do you feel your parents/ friends were/are "genuine" friends?
- Would you invite your friends to share in a holiday dinner with your family? If not, why not?

- Are you ever critical of, judgmental about, or embarrassed by, your friends?
- Are your friends trusting and trustworthy? As their friend, are you?
- What was your experience of friendship like when you were growing up?

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