



Friends Exercise

A Step Toward Discovering Your Why

Your Why is a statement of who you are. And you are who you are no matter what you do or where you go. Your Why is applicable in every aspect of your life, not just your work. This exercise can help you begin to put words to your Why.

Why are your friends your friends?

Finding your Why can be a challenge. However, your friends can be a great resource in your quest to discover it. All you need to do is talk to them. Not only is this a fun exercise, it will also provide some invaluable insight into some of your closest relationships.

Step 1: Make a list of your three to five closest friends

These are the people you trust and love unconditionally; the people you could call at 3 AM with a dilemma, the people you would travel around the world to help. Even if you don't talk to them a lot, they are the friends that will always be there for you just as you will always be there for them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

In person is ideal, but if in the interest of time you need to make a phone call, go for it.

Step 2: Ask those people, "Why are you friends with me?"

At first they may not understand the question. With a very perplexed look on their face, they might say, "What do you mean? We've been great friends forever. That's a strange question." Next, give them some context. Tell them it's an exercise that you're doing to learn more about yourself and it would be very helpful if they could work with you to answer the question.

Again, ask the question, “Why are you my friend?” This time they’ll give you answers like “you’re smart, loyal, kind, funny”. All of those things will be true. Tell them, “Good! You’ve successfully defined the word ‘friend’, but why are you friends with ME.”

Silence is key here. Try not to interrupt or “fill in the blanks” in an effort to reduce the awkward feeling of this conversation. Let them sit with the question in silence for as long as they need to.

This may be a little uncomfortable for both of you because few people really sit down and talk about the deep tenets of their friendship. Remember that your feelings come from the limbic brain, which is not associated with language so it will be difficult for your friends to put their feelings about your deep interpersonal connection into words.

Step 3: Listen

They will keep saying things like, “I don’t know. This is a really hard question.” Just let them keep talking. Keep quiet, keep listening, and most of all, let them keep struggling to find the right words. It may feel that they are going in circles, but just keep LISTENING. Eventually they will make a shift and start talking about themselves.

They will start saying things like

“I feel . . .”

“You make me feel . . .”

“When I’m around you, I feel . . .”

You will likely feel an emotional connection with this person when they describe themselves and the way they FEEL when they are with you. You may find yourself getting goose bumps on your arm or even a tear in your eye. This often happens when you experience something that feels right.

Step 4: Clarify

Since you’ve likely never had this conversation with your friend before, use your curiosity about the things they’ve shared to ask more questions to clarify what they mean. Here’s an example:

FRIEND *“I feel good when you’re around. I feel like no matter what I do, you’ll accept me.”*

YOU *“What do you mean when you say “feel good”?”*



FRIEND *“I don’t know. I guess I feel calm. I feel like no matter how stressed I am when I sit down with you, I just feel more relaxed.”*

YOU *“So no matter how stressed you are, when you and I get together, you forget your worries?”*

FRIEND *“Not exactly. I feel like my worries aren’t as big a deal as I thought they were when we start talking about them.”*

YOU *“So I help you put things in perspective.”*

FRIEND *“Exactly! Then I feel much more calm.”*

Once you have a clear understanding of what your friend means, take good clear notes.

Step 5: Compare

As you compare your notes from the conversations you’ve had with different friends, you will start to notice that your friends are saying similar things about you. Take those key words or phrases and list them below.

For example: My best friends say I . . .

1. Put things in perspective
2. Help make things more clear
3. Help them see the big picture

Once you’ve discovered what you have that your friends don’t get from anyone else, you’re one step closer to articulating your Why and what it is that you naturally do to make your mark in the world.

Key words and phrases my friends use to describe me...
