



Friendship: An Exposé

Joseph Epstein

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Just as his best-selling *Snobbery* argued that contemporary American snobbery isn't what it used to be, *Friendship: An Exposé* begins with Joseph Epstein's feeling that friendship, too, is somehow different today. From the idealization of "family time" to the acceptance of gender equality, from technological leaps like e-mail and instant messaging to the (very recent) assumption that your husband or wife will be your best friend, Epstein charts the unexpected and surprising forces that have put pressure on and reshaped friendship.

Epstein sketches an amusing yet serious anatomy of friendship in its contemporary version: its duties and requirements ("Reciprocity, or Is It Obligation?"), the various kinds of friendships ("A Little Taxonomy of Friends"), the differences between male and female friendships, the complications marriage creates ("Friendship's New Rival"), even what happens when sex enters the equation. Moving easily from Aristotle to *Seinfeld*, and drawing on his own experiences with people great (Saul Bellow and Ralph Ellison) and unknown (an army bunkmate), he uncovers the rich and often surprising truths of friendship, illuminating those relationships -- contradictory, complicated, and wonderful -- without which we'd all be lost.

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