When friendships no longer work

We have endless ways of talking about and understanding romantic breakups. Because most intimate relationships are monogamous, it is necessary for one to end for another to begin. This means that there's a lot of attention paid to how to break up, and how to manage the emotional pain at the end of relationships.

What our culture doesn't pay much attention to is the end of friendships. It's almost as if friendships are expected to last forever, in some cases from primary school into late adulthood. Even as people grow farther and farther apart, friends can feel pressure to stay in touch and hanging out as often as you previously have.

If the thought of spending time with certain friends feels more and more like an obligation, accompanied by a sense of dread rather than excitement, it could be time to end that friendship.

Reasons to end a friendship

- **Changing values** – Once upon a time you and your friend bonded over your love of movies, music, or fashion, but now you feel like you have nothing in common. Interests and values change—whether it's personally, professionally, or politically—and people move on.
- **Trust issues –** Do you have a friend who is constantly spreading mean gossip about people you both know? If it feels that your boundaries are being crossed or if you suspect your friend may be spilling your secrets, you may begin to feel your trust is being violated.
- **Reliability –** In any friendship, there needs to be room to shift plans around. But if you know someone who is a chronic canceller—breaking plans at the last minute, showing up 45 minutes late, or even standing you up altogether—you can start to feel hurt and taken for granted.
- **Growing apart** – Sometimes, there isn't a specific reason for a friendship to end, it just doesn't feel like it used to. Instead of being fun and full of laughter, getting together feels dull, and you find you have nothing to talk about.

If for any reason you feel like a friendship is no longer feeding you or offering what you need, it may be time to end it—even temporarily. Rather than just let things drift off, it can feel good to sit down with your friend and have an honest conversation about what needs of yours aren't being met, and why you want to take time apart. Take this approach rather than relying on Facebook and unfriending to get your point across.

It can certainly be stressful to consider formally ending a friendship, partly because it's something that isn't really talked about. However, consider the peace of mind you'll get once the tension of this friendship is removed. And remember, like with any relationships, endings aren't necessarily permanent; they can sometimes be an essential step into new, more comfortable territory.