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Best Friends Forever: Surviving a Breakup with Your Best Friend

Irene S. Levine
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Many women are brought up to believe that they should have one special friend in their lives, a BFF—Best Friend Forever. Unfortunately, this belief often leads to heartbreak, since friends are rarely forever. As people grow and change, so do the dynamics of their friendships, and many friendships lose their initial intimacy or fizzle out altogether.

Levine, a psychologist and professor at New York University Medical School, guides women through the myths that set up unrealistic expectations of friendship. She discusses the various reasons a friendship can fail, offers suggestions for saving those worth saving, and tips on bowing gracefully out of those that are no longer working. “Most women relish being the chosen one, the best friend,” Levine writes about the BFF myth. However, chances are slim that one person can fill every niche in another’s life. It is more practical to think of having a close friend for different aspects of one’s life, she says, such as a mom-friend for play dates with the kids, a philosophical friend for intellectual conversations, and an outgoing friend who can introduce you to new people and experiences.

Sometimes friendships grow in a way that no longer fulfills any needs in a woman’s life. This was the case for Amber, whose friend Pia was a blast to hang out with while the two women were in their twenties and frequenting clubs. When Amber married and had a child, however, Pia’s swearing and revealing clothes were less appealing. Amber had grown and her life had changed, while Pia’s had not. The disparity in lifestyles caused a chasm that became too big to ignore.

This book is of interest to all women. While much of it focuses on what can go wrong in a friendship and how to deal with endings, there is also great advice on how to make friends and keep them. Forgiveness, avoiding ruts, and apologizing when warranted are some of the ways to save a worthwhile friendship. After all, friendships are important even if they don’t last forever, and a BFF is a wonderful asset. As one woman put it, “Your best friend isn’t the person you call when you are in jail; most likely, she is sitting in the cell beside you.”
CHRISTINE CANFIELD (September / October 2009)

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