

The Friendship Cure: Reconnecting in the Modern World

Kate Leaver

The Overlook Press (Oct 23, 2018)

Hardcover \$26.95 (304pp)

978-1-4683-1659-9

Did you know that scientists can detect loneliness in our blood? It turns out that living in the most interconnected yet possibly the loneliest society in history comes with a plethora of mental and physical health problems. “We are literally dying of loneliness; our hearts weakened and our immune systems ravaged by it,” writes journalist Kate Leaver. Making and keeping good friends, it seems, can be life-saving.

Kate Leaver has translated her fascination with friendship into a lively, information-packed book that’s as fun to read as it is informative. It traces friendship’s curative nature through scientific research, psychotherapies, personal stories, and interviews with academics and everyday folks. Topics explored include what we get from friends that romance can’t give us; whether a man and a woman can be besties; whether the Internet is a blessing or a curse on friendship; how men and women express friendship differently; why having good friends helps us live longer and better; how much time is needed to keep a friendship alive; and much more.

Some of her findings are surprising, including the power of gossip to create and maintain social bonds; why meaningful interaction is unlikely in groups of over 150 members; why adolescent friendship is like “compiling elements of your soul”; and that one of the evolutionary reasons for female bonding is protective, because, she writes, “The single greatest source of danger to a woman is now, and possibly always has been, the male of the human species.” Leaver calls women fighting for women “one of the most powerful forces in existence.”

For overworked, stressed-out, lonely people, Leaver’s book shows how friendship offers a safe place to be our real, fallible, even outlandishly weird selves and know that we’re accepted and loved. Read it—then go call a friend.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November/December 2018)

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