



## Social studies

# SPEAK EASY

Lack of communication is just as bad for friendship as it is for a romantic relationship

by Parul Khanna

## DEAL with this

I always give him / her thoughtful gifts, I get random ones in return.

**Solution:** To avoid feeling used, give gifts of equal or similar value. Confronting your friend about this is not recommended. **I call her / him more often than she / he calls me.** **Solution:** People have different ways of expressing themselves. Some people are genuinely not phone-friendly. Don't confront your friend about this. **She / he ignores me when with other friends.**

**Solution:** Is this a one-off thing? If not, talk to your friend about how you feel. She / he may not do this intentionally. **I give more. I go out of my way for my friends.**

**Solution:** Never make such a generalised statements. If you feel you are being taken for granted, say so, but not in an accusatory tone. Say, 'I feel bad about...'

**My friend never makes an effort to meet. I'm the one who visits her / him.**

**Solution:** This could be just a habit your friend has fallen into. Be diplomatic. Say: 'Next time, let's meet at my place.'

**M**EERA YADAV and Chand Sharma were inseparable all through college. Then suddenly, Chand stopped responding to Meera's calls and vanished from her life. When Meera tried to find out what was wrong, Chand was most uncommunicative. So that was the end of that. And Meera hadn't a clue why.

Years later Meera ran into Chand and asked what had gone wrong. She was stunned by Chand's response. "She said she felt it was always her who made the effort. Always her who phoned. Always her to remember birthdays. Always her who changed plans to accommodate my plans. Never me," says Meera. "I was shocked. I had no idea she felt like that."

### EXPRESS YOURSELF

Women tend to have more complicated relationships than men, says Dr Rachna Singh, lifestyle management expert at Artemis Health Institute, Gurgaon. While male friends will often not register 'slights' such as always being the one to call, when they do have problems, they tend to deal with them directly.

"What's the big deal?" asks Iqbal Salwan, a 28-year-old chartered accountant. "I pick up and drop off my friend most of the time. He's lazy by nature, so I usually let him be. But sometimes I kick his butt and make him drop me!"

But what happened between Chand and Meera is a classic case of lack of communication. Just like romantic relationships, friendships also throw up issues small and big that must be tackled and negotiated – which means hidden hurts must not be kept hidden.

"If issues, however small, are not expressed, talked about and tackled between friends, they can lead to major misunderstandings and sometimes ma-

ior barriers in friendships," says Dr Ajay Pal Singh, consultant psychiatrist, Max Healthcare, Delhi.

The basis of any relationship is communication. But it's often difficult for us to bring up problems because we're either scared of confrontation, or afraid of being accused of being over-sensitive.

Clamming up can be injurious to your friendship's health. Says Dr Singh: "When you share your doubts, you feel lighter, and the misunderstanding might be cleared. Plus, it would imply that you are willing to take the friendship forward to another level."

But expressing yourself about every perceived problem doesn't help either. How is the balance to be achieved, then? These case studies may help you learn.

### CASE STUDY # 1

**PRIYA DHIMAN, 26**, online product manager I usually go out of my way for my close friends. But if I feel they don't reciprocate similarly, I get sarcastic. This is a confrontation of sorts – they get the point without being bluntly told about



## GIVE GIFTS TO YOUR FRIENDS OF EQUAL OR SIMILAR VALUE

the problem. Often, the issues are very small – someone hasn't returned a call, someone is always too busy to meet. If I keep bringing these things up, there would be no time to enjoy our friendship.

**Expert reactions:** Priya doesn't bottle things up, and that's good. But her habit of reacting with sarcasm is unpleasant. "She should filter out the very trivial issues from the important ones. Or she risks being taken lightly," says Dr Rachna Singh. Sarcasm is a no-no too. "She should say things like 'I feel bad about...' rather than be judgmental."

Dr Ajay Pal Singh agrees. "Priya should be upfront rather than sarcastic," he says. "This way, the friend will not go on the defensive."

### CASE STUDY # 2

**JASMINE CHOWDHARY, 27**, journalist I sometimes get hurt by things my friends do, but I never discuss it with them. It may show on my face, so really close friends understand. But still, I never bring up the problem. I don't want to come across as a crier. So, I suppress most issues, big or small.

**Expert reactions:** "By inhibiting her reactions and hiding her true emotions, Jasmine will never form genuine friendships," says Dr Rachna Singh. "With good friends, you tend to share yourself. If you are hurt and you do not share it, you are left with that scar always."

Don't worry about your image, says Dr Ajay Pal Singh. "In her bid to appear good, Jasmine will not be able to handle a long relationship as issues will build up and distance will inevitably set in," he says. Also, a common side effect of such suppression of feelings is displacement of anger, where you shout at a subordinate because you feel you can't shout at your friend.

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