Don't know if I want my friend back or not  [1]

Dear Alice,

My (ex?) best friend and I drifted apart a few months ago because of her new boyfriend and my busy schedule. Before, we were like sisters, but now we just ignore each other. She's recently been trying to contact me, and even though I do miss her more than anything, I haven't been answering her calls. I'm not sure if I want her back in my life. There were certain things about our friendship that didn't seem right. There were things we couldn't/wouldn't tell each other. She also liked to make me feel unimportant. I know this makes it seem like we never were true friends, but we meant everything to each other. I just don't know if I should let her back in or not? Please help?

Answer

Dear Reader,

A wise person once said, "Friends are like bras: close to your heart and there for support." There's no question that strong friendships provide sustenance, love, and support for many people; but negative or drama-filled relationships can certainly have the opposite impact. Loss of a friendship may be devastating, but figuring out why you miss the person and why the friendship went sour is a good strategy to get you started. Doing so will help you determine when to let go of a friend or when to fight for one ? but, only you can make that decision and forge a way to move forward.

You mention three primary reasons for the split: drifting apart, not feeling valued by your friend, and being unable to tell each other certain things. At the same time, it sounds like you miss her and the connection you two had. Relationships may lead you to some of the toughest decisions in life. Some factors you may think about when deciding whether or not to contact your friend include:

- What aspects of the friendship do you miss?
- What would you want to be different between you two if you became friends again? Do you think it's possible for those changes to occur?
- Have you tried discussing your concerns with her previously? If so, did she seem open to addressing your concerns?
- Why do you suppose your friend is trying to contact you again? Does it feel like she genuinely wants to reconnect with you or does it seem like there may be some other reason?
Would maintaining a relationship with this person be healthy for your well-being?

Your answers to these questions may help you clarify your thoughts, feelings, and expectations about rekindling a friendship with this person. Having friends with whom you feel comfortable and who treat you well is a good reason to be intentional about your friendships, and only you can decide if she (still) fits that role. You may decide to respond to her and voice your concerns, as it may give you an opportunity to discuss making changes, shifting the type of friendship, or ending the friendship.

If this is the first time you’ve had to engage in this type of difficult conversation, preparing for it ahead of time by thinking through what you want to say, how you want to say it, and the impact it may have on your friend may be a good idea. You might even consider meeting with a trusted advisor, a health promotion specialist, or another friend to talk about how you want to approach the conversation and develop a plan for how you’ll move forwards (whether it goes well or not). Even with preparation, this may be an emotional and difficult conversation, but hopefully it will bring you some peace of mind either way.

Alice!
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Published date:
Oct 15, 2010
Last reviewed on:
Nov 25, 2016
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