

# Friendship: The Real Test of Emotional Intelligence

Here's the truth: most of us think we know how to be a "good friend." We show up, we nod in the right places, maybe send a text with emojis or drop off soup when things are dire. But let's be honest — most of the time, we're winging it.

And friendship isn't just casual.

It's foundational. It's where we learn how to trust, how to connect, how to argue and repair, how to love without contracts or conditions. If we get this wrong, it ripples into every other relationship we have.

The problem isn't that we don't care. The problem is that emotions — ours and theirs — are often left unsupervised. They're like toddlers running with scissors, or worse, like the cast of a bad soap opera loose in your living room. Chaos.

But emotions aren't useless. They're dashboard lights. Anxiety says: I care about this. Anger says: I need a boundary. Guilt says: Try to do better next time. None of those signals is bad — until we misread them, or worse, ignore them.

So if we want to be better friends, we need to get better at emotional intelligence. Here's what that actually looks like in friendship:

## **1. Change the Channel**

Sometimes the best thing a friend can do is not talk. Crank the music. Drag me out for a walk. Put a cookie in my hand. Play with the dog. (Dogs, by the way, are antidepressants with fur.)

The trick is to help your friend feel better without sabotaging tomorrow. A glass of wine? Fine. Three bottles? Not friendship — that's a hangover disguised as comfort.

A good friend knows when to change the channel and bring you back to your body.

## **2. Borrow My Voice**

We all have that inner narrator who loves drama: "I'm falling apart. This is the end. Cue the violins."

A great friend helps us shift the script. When I say, "I'm losing it," the emotionally intelligent friend doesn't dismiss me or pile on advice. They say, "Of course you feel cracked open — look at what you're carrying." Boom. Reframed. Suddenly, I'm not crazy, I'm human.

That's what friends do: they lend us a kinder, saner voice when our own goes off the rails.

### **3. Zoom Out**

Emotions make everything feel like NOW in all caps. But good friends help us zoom out.

They remind you: you've been through hard before — and survived. They remind you that in a month (maybe even a week) this meltdown won't feel nearly as permanent.

They don't trivialize your pain. They right-size it.

That's what emotionally intelligent friends do: they hold the now and remind you of the later.

### **4. Change the Scenery**

You know how your living room sometimes feels like a trauma echo chamber? Like every corner has heard you rant before, and it's only too happy to cue it all up again?

A smart friend interrupts that. They say, "Let's go for coffee. Let's hit Target. Let's sit on the porch." Changing the space changes the story.

It's not about the latte. It's about reminding your nervous system that life is bigger than your living room.

## **5. The Friend You Really Need**

Here's the kicker: when emotions are messy, we usually reach for the wrong kind of friend.

The Listener Zombie: Sweet, sympathetic, nods a lot... and leaves you exactly where they found you.

The Advice Tyrant: Can't wait five seconds before pelting you with solutions.

Both mean well. Neither helps.

The friend you actually need — and the one you should aim to be — is the **Dual-Wielding Emotional Ninja**. The one who can sit in the mess with you, let you ugly cry, and then at the right moment, help you shift perspective.

They don't leave you drowning, and they don't throw you a cinder block labeled "advice." They hand you the lifeline and remind you: you're stronger than this story.

## **The Friendship Assignment**

Here's the hard truth: being a good friend isn't just about loyalty or showing up at birthdays. It's about

being emotionally intelligent enough to know when to listen, when to reframe, and when to just drag each other out for ice cream.

Friendship is where we practice being human with each other. It's where we test-drive compassion, perspective, and presence.

So ask yourself: right now, are you a Zombie, a Tyrant, or a Ninja?

Your answer matters — not just for your friendships, but for every relationship you'll ever have.