

613 "Friends"...and no one to talk to

In the Internet age, it's easy to see friendship as a number: 103, 381, 3,457, or more "Friends"! But we all know that in order for a friendship to be *real*, both parties need to work at it. And in order for a friendship to be *deep*, both parties must shift their efforts toward putting the other's needs before their own. In real life it's the one or two or three *friends* that you turn to when times get tough; the other two hundred "friends" can get a status update later.

Relationships can be complicated and confusing, and it's not uncommon for each of us to wonder at some point what another person is thinking or feeling. And if it's a boyfriend/ girlfriend relationship, the other person sometimes seems to speak a completely different language!

What and how we think about others affects our behavior on every level. If you think another person is attractive, you may try to get their attention. If you think another person is smart, you may use bigger words in your conversation. If you think another person is boring, you may ignore them when they tell you a story. How we treat other people is a direct reflection of what we think about them.

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When you pause to reflect, you can easily discover the different ways that your *thinking* impacts your relationships.

- How we speak to others reveals our feelings about them. Our words can either build others up or tear them down.
- How we hear others communicates how we value them. You can tell the difference between someone only listening to you and someone really hearing you.
- How we see others impacts how we interact with them. You will begin to see others in a totally new light when you see them as deserving of dignity and respect.

 How we act toward others demonstrates what—and who—is meaningful to us. "Walk the walk" and "Practice what you preach" became clichés exactly because they are so true!

If you challenge yourself to speak, hear, see, and act in a healthy way that brings life to other people, you will start to see those seeds take root as your relationships blossom, grow, and flourish.