

AN EPIDEMIC OF LONELINESS—Keeping it Real

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Two friends, Amy Weatherly and Jess Johnston, both writers, came together and bonded over a passion of writing and wrote a book, Here for It, to share wisdom on making, keeping, and deepening friendships. They also have a Facebook community, “*Sister, I Am With You.*”

1. **Be flexible, forgiving, and honest.** We are called to be forgiving, if we want forgiveness. Our society moves much faster than it did when we were entering adulthood. Life gets in the way, and we feel the squeeze. We need to understand these changes and work to accept and adjust to these challenges. We must be flexible on how our lives change. When we learn to adapt and go with the flow, we will become more tuned to these changes. Being grounded in faith and trusting God is even more important in this world today.
2. **Be a good listener.** We might feel nervous meeting new people. Unsure what to say or interact. Start with listening. People are poor listeners today. When you let someone else take the lead, a door opens and a burden lifts. The person you are talking to was created and loved by God. It is wonderful to have those kind of relationships. We can learn so much. When in doubt ask questions. Express interest in the other person. People love to be heard. Your interests signals you believe they matter. Pay compliments to those you are talking to. Yes, some people will always want to talk. Turn away and talk with someone else.
3. **Hang in there when things get hard.** A good friend will say, I am here for you when you need me. A good friend means it and follows through. When people are struggling they may say things they later regret. Support them because someday you'll fall apart too. From a line in a sermon, “If something in your life is lacking, plant seeds of generosity in that area.” Take the initiative to get things going. Have a party, or dinner. Do something crazy. Plan those seeds of generosity. Remember that God is your first and best friend. He never gives up on you. None of us is as good a friend to God as He is to us. He loves us anyway. Let God be your foundation. Remain open, stay generous, be forgiving, and always pray.
4. **Remember that everyone sees things differently.** We all have our own brokenness. We have wounds that others can't see, or we might not be aware of. When Covid hit we had to come up with different ways to manage friendships. Some of that distancing continues today. Ask questions: What's happening where you are? How are you handling it? What do you do to vent? Patient listening lowers expectations. Honesty, without blame, helps to figure things out. Build to make your friendship stronger. God never gives up on us, but also does everything in his power to rescue us from our worst selves. He is trying to bring out the best in each one of us. Let God show you the way. Listen. Ask questions. Express interest in everyone. Compliment people's achievements. Be patient and understanding. Don't walk away when things get hard. Be honest about your own struggles, and don't pretend your perfect. You aren't! Offer grace.