



Good friendship, in Buddhism, means considerably more than associating with people that one finds amenable and who share one's interests. It means in effect seeking out wise companions to whom one can look for guidance and instruction.

Bhikkhu Bodhi

There is a natural ebb and flow to friendships. The special ones survive.

Colette McBeth

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.

Henri Nouwen

People who seek together to live transformed lives enter important and tricky terrain. Spiritual companions are open to challenge without forcing opinions or judgements. Think of a friend or mentor that has contributed to your spiritual growth. What attributes did they possess?

What Does it Mean to be a Seeker?



The Phases of The Seeker's Way

The path of the seeker includes three interrelated phases. These phases are not necessarily linear or sequential. They can be but often are integrated and interwoven.

Lose Your Way: This phase invites us to leave and/or lose what is familiar in order to venture out into new possibilities of transformation and transcendence

Find Your Guides: This phase invites us to find voices from the past and the present that challenge, support, and nurture us on the path

Forge Your Path: This phase invites us to make our own way rather than walk the path of another. The seeker's way values community, but also realizes it is a deeply personal journey

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As a spiritual seeker, you are like a sailor, always wanting to go to a new place within yourself.

Sadhguru

Ponder

The above framework gives a simple but wholistic way to understand the seeker's path. Can you see each of these phases at work in your own life?

The Power of Spiritual Friendship

The support and encouragement we give one another in practice is extremely important and powerful. It's difficult to practice alone.

Connecting with other people involved in spiritual practice renews our inspiration and energy. It can help keep practice alive for us in times when our motivation has waned. It can provide a way for us to support and inspire others, which itself is very strengthening to our practice.

Jack Kornfield

What Makes for A Spiritual Friendship?

Read and reflect on the Kornfield quote above. Spiritual friendship allows for both support and inspiration as we seek deeper personal and communal transformation. But what does that look like? Consider the words of the Buddha.

He gives what is hard to give.

He does what is hard to do.

He endures what is hard to endure.

He reveals his secrets to you.

He keeps your secrets.

When misfortunes strike, he doesn't abandon you.

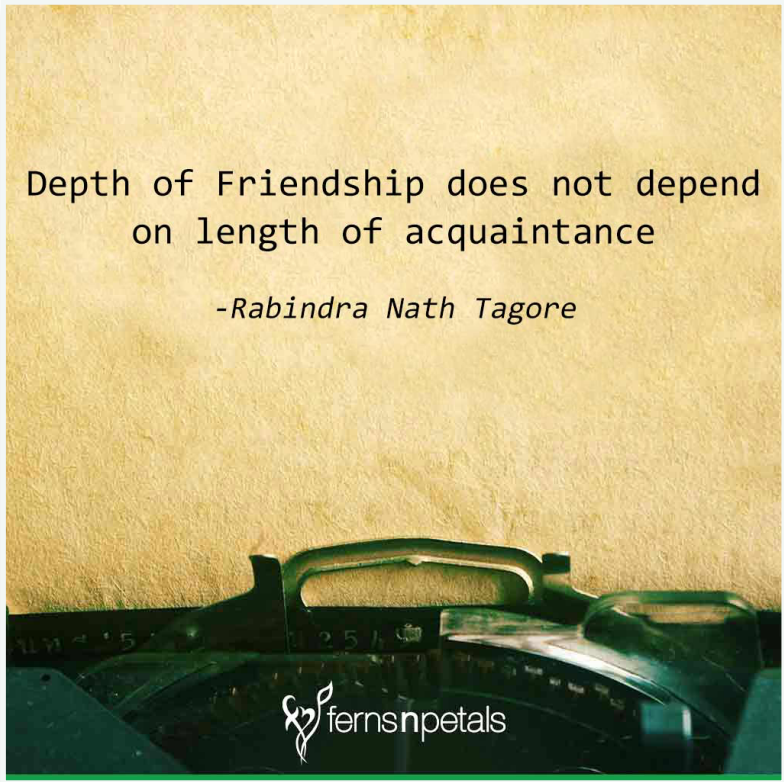
When you've fallen down, he doesn't look down on you.

A friend endowed with these seven qualities is worth associating with.

Reflect on each of the seven qualities. What do you think each quality means in light of spiritual friendship? Do you have examples of these qualities in your friendships?

Which qualities do you need more of in your spiritual friendships and what would it take to both give and receive those qualities?

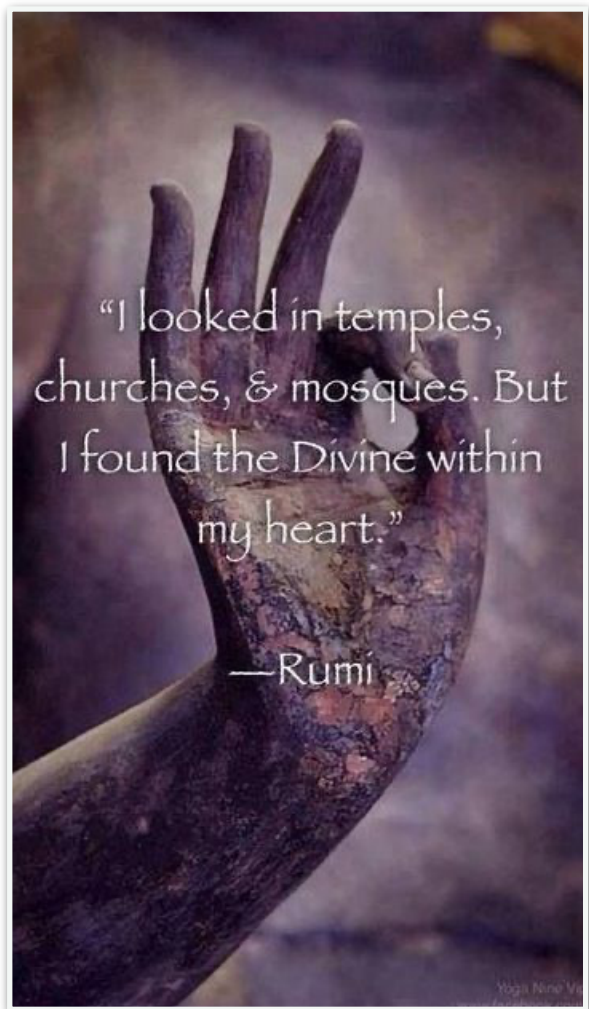
Ponder The Words - How Do These Quotes Relate to Spiritual Friendship?



Depth of Friendship does not depend
on length of acquaintance

-Rabindra Nath Tagore

 fernsnpetals




“I looked in temples,
churches, & mosques. But
I found the Divine within
my heart.”

—Rumi

Going Deeper - Soul Friends


 The logo for 'brainpickings' is displayed in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The word 'brain' is in white and 'pickings' is in black, both set against a bright yellow rectangular background.


 A graphic featuring a black heart shape on a dark background. The text 'donating = loving' is written in a light, sans-serif font across the heart.

donating = loving

For 15 years, I have been spending hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars each month to keep Brain Pickings going. It has remained free and ad-free

Anam Cara and the Essence of True Friendship: Poet and Philosopher John O'Donohue on the Beautiful Ancient Celtic Notion of Soul-Friend

"A friend ... awakens your life in order to free the wild possibilities within you."

Below is a link to the website Brain Pickings. If you're not familiar with Brain Pickings, well... you're welcome. It is a treasure trove of wisdom from all ages, sages, traditions, and times. In the link below, you'll find an article about spiritual friendship that explores the work of John O'Donohue. This great Irish poet often thought and wrote about soul friendships. The article in Brain Pickings introduces you to his ideas on soul friends.

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/08/12/anam-cara-john-o-donohue-soul-friend/>