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

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. Loss of a friendship may be devastating, yet information about friend "break ups" seems sparse compared to talk about the endings of intimate relationships. So it may be difficult to know when to let go of a friend or when to fight for one and how to go about doing either.

You mention three primary reasons for the split: the drifting apart, your sense that your friend liked to make you feel unimportant, and you being unable to tell each other certain things. On the one hand, you miss your friend and on the other hand, you're not sure if your friend is the type of person you want to let back into your life. Relationships may have some of the toughest decisions in life. Some issues you might consider in 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?
- Could you be friends in a different context, such as only doing things you both enjoy (i.e., activity partners), and accepting that you two may not "mean everything to each other" again?
- Why do you suppose your friend is trying to contact you again? Does it feel like your friend 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 of healthy friendships and other relationships. Having friends who you feel comfortable with and who treat you well is a good reason to be intentional about your friendships. You may decide to respond to your friend to voice your concerns of the friendship and intentions of the friendship (e.g., making changes, shifting the type of friendship, or ending the friendship). If this is the first time you have had a break of sorts with friendships, it may require some bravery to work things out. The resulting sense of resolution from this difficult, hopefully without regret, decision may help mend your torn heart.

Time may change many things, but you are the one to choose what stays close to your heart.

Alice!
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