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Off to college and losing touch with friends ^[1]

Alice,

Help me! I left my two best friends at home when I went to college. Now don't get me wrong, I love college! I'm making new friends and I even love some of my classes. I just feel like I'm forgetting these friends. I only get to talk to them for like 15 minutes, if that, a week. I feel like we are losing touch and I don't want that to happen. Can you help me? Thanks!

— Losing touch

Answer

Dear Losing touch,

What you describe is an experience that's common during times of transition. Going from high school to college is often hard, and as you've indicated, the balance between making new friends while maintaining old friendships may be tricky. With any type of long-distance relationship, there are some tried and true ways to stay up-to-date with each other's lives. For instance, you might stay connected through the web, email, text message, phone, or even snail mail! When you're able to, you might also rely on good old-fashioned in-person hangouts. In the end, it's probably wise to use a combination of these methods to keep in touch. It's also worth pointing out that most relationships will continue to change over your lifetime, which you're seeing firsthand right now.

First, a focus on technology: you have a lot of options here! From the different forms of instant messaging to social media, there are a plethora of ways to send pictures or messages to quickly let friends know you're thinking of them. For more in-depth communication, you could call your friends or write longer emails (with pictures) about what's going on in your life. If you're craving some face time with your besties, but have trouble being in the same place at the same time, why not try to set up a video chat? You could even do some fun activities together such as taking an online workout class or watching a movie through a shared streaming service. To make sure you're setting time aside to catch up, you may even try setting a time each week to catch up with friends from home so it's scheduled into your calendar.

If you're hoping for a more personal touch, you may also try sending letters, cards, or gifts

through the postal service. Keeping a list of birthdays in your planner or calendar may remind you of these opportunities to send some love their way .

Finally, you could take advantage of any in-person time you have with your friends from home. Many colleges and universities have overlapping holiday breaks, so it might be fun to plan mini-reunions if everyone is back in your hometown during these times. Maybe you and your friends could take turns planning so that each person gets a chance to organize a little get-together or alternate visits to each other's campuses. You might work on these plans throughout the semester on a collaborative document or planner.

Even with all of these great ways to stay in touch, it's good to remember that it's natural for friendships to change over time — especially when friends move away for college. You might notice, as time goes on that you mostly keep in touch with a just few close buddies from home. These might be the exceptional friendships, the ones that withstand the test of time and distance. Keeping up with your best pals from home and making new friends might be a tough balancing act, but also an opportunity for growth. People may grow apart over time naturally, for many reasons, as they go through different seasons of their lives. It doesn't diminish the connection they had, but it may not be the same as circumstances and people change. Enjoy your friends, wherever they're to be found!

Alice!

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