

Friends After Thirty

Making room for connection
when life no longer
arranges it for you



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A short guide to understanding everyday life

About this edition

Friends After Thirty

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This guide explores the gap between wanting friendship and having a workable way to meet. Jo, Malik, Tess, Ana, and the people around them are invented characters. The scenes illustrate possibilities rather than explain every reader's life. The suggestions are optional educational exercises, not treatment. This guide and its tools have not been clinically reviewed or tested with readers. Choose what fits your circumstances, and set aside anything that makes things harder.

This sample contains the opening chapter of the complete guide.

Text developed with AI and editorially reviewed. The explanations distinguish research, interpretations and original practical suggestions.

CHAPTER 1

We must get together

Tess and Ana have known each other for eleven years. They met through a mutual friend when both lived in the same neighbourhood and worked similar hours. They could text at ten in the morning to say “lunch?” and mean it. They still like each other. When they meet by chance at the shops, the conversation is warm and fast. Ana knows the name of Tess's difficult aunt. Tess remembers the holiday when Ana's luggage was lost for four days. They have plenty to talk about.

It always ends the same way.

"We should get together properly."

"Definitely. Let me check my week and text you."

The text, when it arrives, says something like “how about sometime next week?” Ana has a toddler, a child in primary school, and a partner who works late shifts. Her free evenings often find her too tired for conversation. Tess works four days a week at a small charity and spends Fridays with her mother, whose mobility has declined after a fall. Shopping, cooking, and company take much of the day. They both mean the promise. Neither turns it into something that fits. Weeks pass, and the next meeting is another accidental one at the same shop.

The affection is still there. The arrangement that once let them enjoy it has changed.

Consider Jo. Jo moved cities eight months ago for a new position in logistics at a distribution centre. She is competent and well liked at work. She eats lunch with colleagues most days, exchanges messages in a group chat about weekend plans, and has been invited to two birthday drinks since arriving. Her phone is not silent. Her calendar is not empty. Yet on a Saturday afternoon, when the work talk has stopped and the group chat has gone quiet, she notices that there is no one in this city she could call to say "I'm nearby - want to walk?" She has many contacts and no companion.

Jo misses her old friend Priya, who moved abroad three years ago. She misses their routine: walking to a café after work, talking about nothing much, being comfortable in silence. Her new colleagues know the work she does. They do not yet know much of the rest of her life. More invitations might help, but she is looking for something more particular than a full calendar.

Malik has friends an hour away. He likes them and wants to see them. But Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings now find him at his mother's flat, helping with meals and her care routine. The gatherings he once attended have become difficult to reach.

Thirty is a rough marker in this book, not a biological turning point. The change it describes can arrive much earlier or later: familiar settings stop bringing the same people together. Work, care, health, money, and geography can all alter the opportunities. For some people, a later transition brings more contact. A new job or a

child's school may introduce people they come to know well.

For Tess and Ana, something used to do much of the arranging: nearby homes, similar hours, and unclaimed parts of the day. What could do that work now?

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

Continue the conversation

Friends After Thirty explores how to make room for connection when familiar arrangements stop working. The full guide follows Tess, Ana, Jo and Malik through invitations, practical limits, changing expectations and choices about where their effort can go.

Inside the complete book

2. Wanting company is not the same as having a way to meet
3. The expectations we bring to friendship
4. The old arrangement has changed
5. Make an invitation someone can answer
6. Make room without keeping score
7. A friendship is still two people

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