

2025

FRIENDSHIP INTENTIONS

How to make (and keep) intentions around
building more satisfying platonic relationships



@FRIENDFORWARD



WELCOME, FRIEND.

As a friendship coach and educator, I spend hours a week listening to women share some of their most personal fears, goals, and memories concerning female friendships.

I also hear from journalists and podcast hosts seeking out my advice for national media outlets and as I speak to each of them, one thing becomes perfectly clear: We're all out here trying to do our best to create connections that satisfy our desire for platonic intimacy. It is my hope that this ebook gives you clarity and direction in setting intentions for the new year as you work to nurture the kind of friendships you've been dreaming of.

You got this.

Danielle Bayard Jackson

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INTRODUCTION

Every December, we grow collectively reflective about all we've been through over the past year. This reflection often gives way to a new wave of motivation to enter the following year with more clarity and intention.

While women may refer to "resolutions" in different ways, the concept of setting purposeful goals for a new chapter remains popular. Research shows that goal-setting is directly correlated to higher performance, motivation, and purpose, so it's no wonder that we find ourselves intent on determining a better path for ourselves in the year to come.

While the most popular resolutions center around weight loss, finances, and career, we would argue that one of the most important items on the list should be improved friendships.

Why?

Because there is a mountain of research that reveals that the single greatest determining factor on our overall life satisfaction and well being is not our marital status or our income, but the quality of our relationships. Meta-analyses have found that while exercise and diet can decrease our risk of death by ~25%, having a large social network decreases that risk by 45%. Friendships matter.

So why enter into a new year without a plan to create (and enrich) what's arguably the most important thing we'll ever have?



THIS EBOOK IS DESIGNED TO WALK YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS OF :

- PRIORITIZING YOUR FRIENDSHIPS
- REALIZING SPECIFIC WAYS IN WHICH YOUR SOCIAL CONNECTIONS CAN BE IMPROVED
- USING RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES TO CREATE THE KIND OF FRIENDSHIPS YOU'VE BEEN LONGING FOR

SO LET'S GET INTO IT.

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CHAPTER 01

THE PROBLEM WITH TRADITIONAL RESOLUTIONS



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If you're a normal person, you've likely created new years resolutions only to break them a few weeks (or, honestly, days) later. Right? Yeah, it's hard out here.

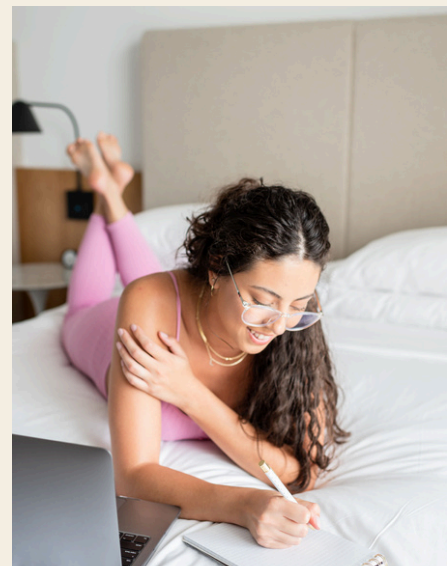
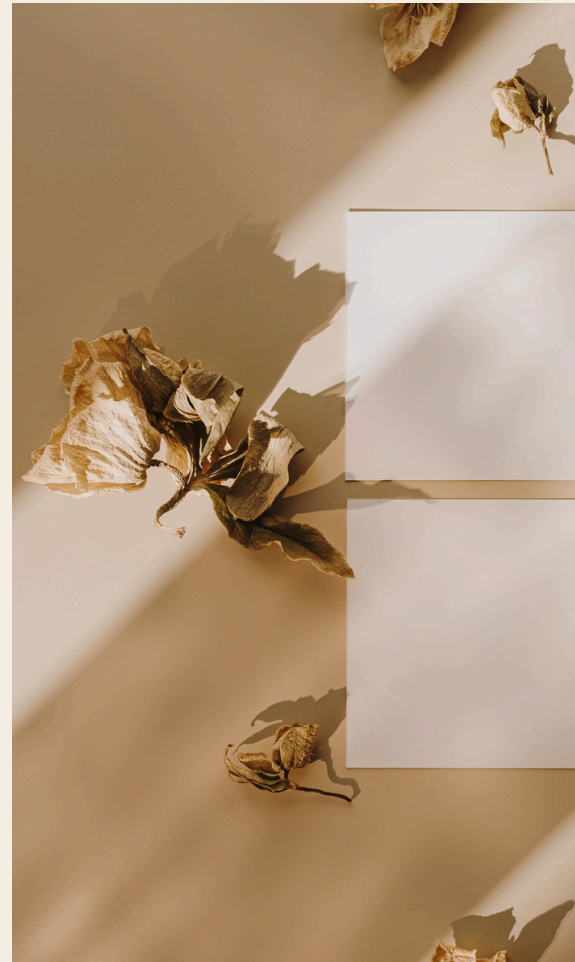
But you're not alone.

Resolutions are tough to keep because:

1. We make them rigid, not allowing ourselves enough flexibility.
2. Our standards are high, making us more prone to give up if we fall short (even a little bit).
3. We are trying to do it alone, outside of the support of our social network.
4. We fail to align our goals with realistic versions of our future selves (more on this later).

When it comes to friendship resolutions, the goal is to enhance our platonic relationships with other women, but it's a marathon, not a sprint. So how do we set ourselves up for success?

In upcoming sections, you'll take an assessment to identify your personal high-priority friendship intentions, but before we jump into that, let's talk about how to keep them.



CHAPTER 02

PSYCHOLOGY-BASED TIPS TO KEEP YOUR
FRIENDSHIP INTENTIONS



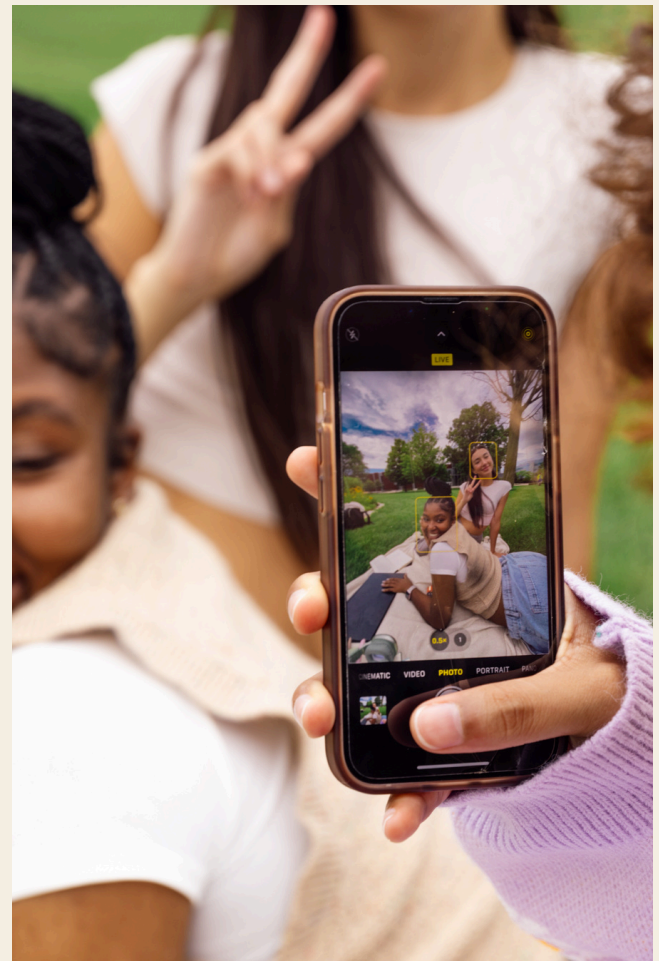
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Here are five research-based ways to keep your 2025 Friendship Resolutions (list inspired by Melina Palmer, behavioral economist):

1. Avoid what's known as "anticipated regret". This is the idea that you are experiencing future regret RIGHT NOW. If you are constantly asking yourself, "What if I break this resolution? What if I can't do it? What if I become a total quitter?", then you are less likely to follow-through on your goals.

Instead, make sure the resolutions you're making are actually important to you. This will train you to commit despite whatever might happen because, to you, it's totally worth the persistence.

2. Use the small-step method. Instead of committing to "making new friends", think about one tangible, conquerable aspect of that goal that you can commit to daily or weekly. Dr. Elliot Berkman's research shows that when you can structure your world to help you reach your goal in small but mighty ways, you're more likely to reach it. Consider something like, "I will speak to one stranger each day." (And if you generally get overwhelmed when you think about all the "friendship stuff" you want to change, our new book [*Fighting for our Friendships; The Science and Art of Women's Relationships*](#) was designed with you in mind!)



3. Visualize your future self, and plan for her.

Research reveals that we view our future self as a completely different person, one who is evolved and capable and wise. In fact, one study showed participants a 10 to 20-year aged photo of themselves, and those participants saved more for their retirement than participants who did not see aged photos. We are willing to work on behalf of future US when we can see ourselves.

So try this: Where will you be in three years? Who will you be? What will the friendships of Future You be like? Take some time to really envision this, and create your friendship intentions with her in mind.

Listen to one of our viral videos about the "future self" [here](#).



4. Try to "W.O.O.P" This is an acronym created by Gabriele Oettingen, a German academic and psychologist whose work centers around motivation and goal-setting. These four steps will make achieving your goal more likely.

- Ask "What is my **w**ish?"
- Ask "What's my desired **o**utcome?"
- Think about "What are my **o**bstacles?" Oettingen stresses that most times the obstacles are internal (emotional) rather than external.
- "What is my **p**lan?"

Dr. Oettingen's research finds that thinking relaxes, but it doesn't motivate. So you'll need to tangibly plan next steps.

5. Personalize your goals. There was a research study where one group of participants was asked to walk 10K steps each day. The other group was allowed to set their own goal (some under 10K, some over). Those who set their goals were likely to hit them and to hit them consistently over a period of time. So make sure the goals you create are personalized to you.



CHAPTER 03

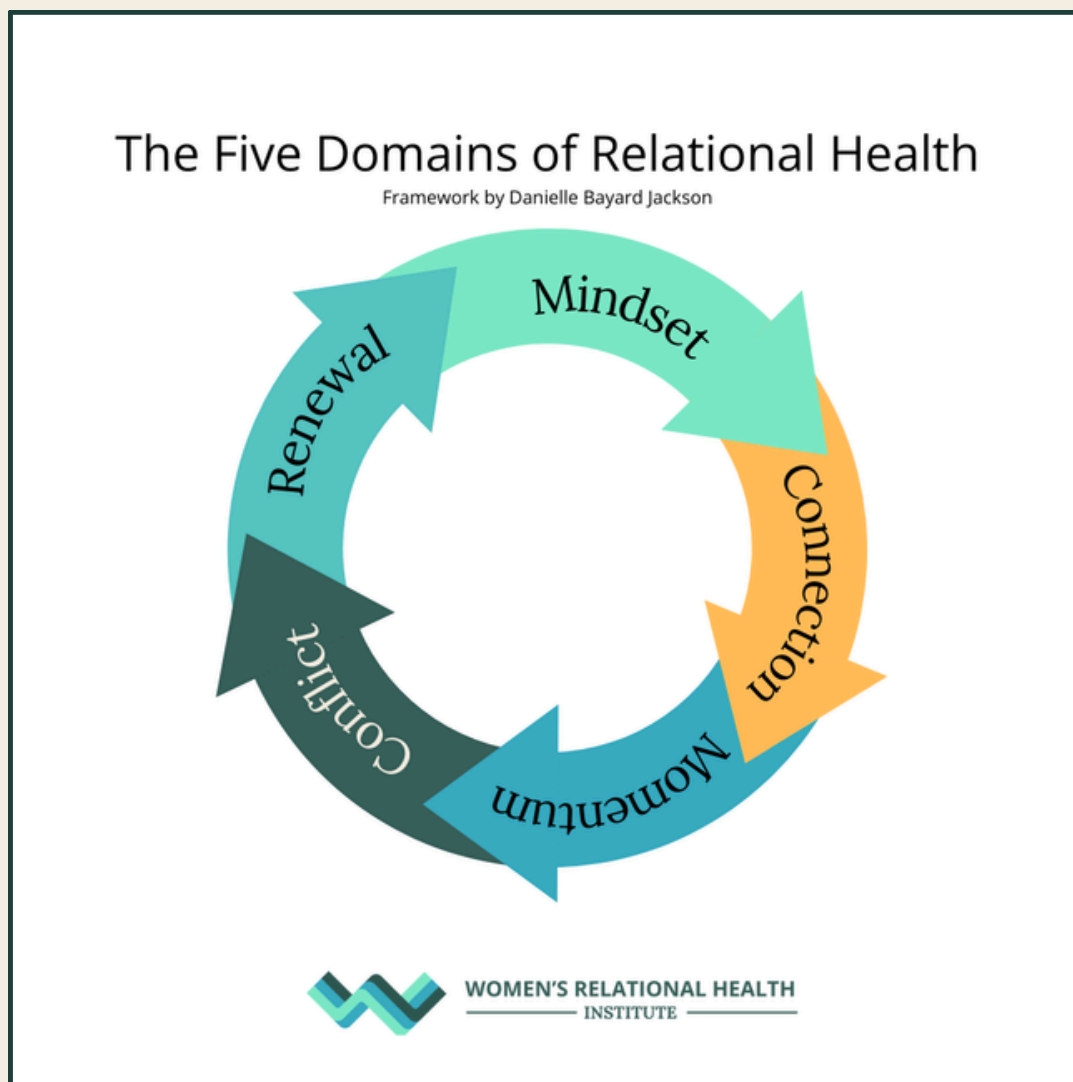
TYPES OF FRIENDSHIP RESOLUTIONS



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Danielle Bayard Jackson, Director at the Women's Relational Health Institute, created the Five Domains of Women's Relational Health Framework. While she teaches this framework in detail exclusively in her group coaching programs, a loose outline has been provided here to help guide you through creating meaningful friendship resolutions that will greatly improve your friendships in the new year.

The Five Domains of Women's Relational Health Framework includes: mindset, connections, momentum, conflict, and renewal.



Let's take a look at each of these domains, because you might want your unique friendship intentions to center around the areas that are most pressing for you as an individual.

MINDSET

Explore the mindsets required to identify and enter into healthy friendships. For many, this module of our the Friend Forward group coaching program requires the most self-reflection and can stir some powerful emotions!

Friendship intentions in this stage may involve confronting false beliefs about:

- Your capacity to create better friendships,
- Others' abilities and interests in creating connections with you
- The overall friendship landscape itself



CONNECTION

How do you create new friendships? This stage is all about starting meaningful conversations (with ease!), positioning yourself in front of the right people, and attracting others using optimal body language that signals openness.

Friendship intentions in this stage may involve...

- Confidently initiating interactions with new people
- Maintaining conversations
- Strategically positioning yourself to invite new connections

MOMENTUM

This stage of the framework involves 1). moving new people from "acquaintances" to genuine friends and 2). creating more depth in your existing friendships to experience more satisfaction and sense of connection.

Friendship intentions in this stage may involve...

- Making more time for existing friends
- Following up with new acquaintances more intentionally
- Committing to not cancelling plans



CONFLICT

The truth is that (healthy) conflict is inevitable in any relationship. If you've been prematurely ending friendships because you didn't know how to manage (internal or external) issues, this may be a critical area of focus in your friendships this year because left unresolved, it can lead to serious loneliness and disconnection.

Friendship intentions in this stage may involve...

- Committing to speak up (with directness and compassion) when something is on your heart without fear of abandonment or consequence
- Listening with humility when friends voice ways you've disappointed them
- Voicing your boundaries with confidence
- Avoiding "spiral thinking" when a (healthy, resolvable) issue arises



RENEWAL

Not every friendship is meant to last. Release a friendship gracefully and manage your feelings in a healthy way without bringing unresolved issues and false mindsets into new friendships.

Friendship intentions in this stage may involve...

- Trading bitterness for gratitude in friendships that are coming to an end
 - Differentiating between friendships and behaviors that need to be released and those that simply require more effort (and are worth it!)
 - Identifying friendship baggage that may threaten to sabotage new relationships
-

CHAPTER 04

COMMON MISTAKES WHEN WRITING FRIENDSHIP INTENTIONS



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In an effort to make tangible progress on your 2025 friendship intentions, you'll want to be sure to avoid the following mistakes:

Including words like “more” or “less” in your phrasing. Avoid general, immeasurable resolutions like, “I want to spend more time with friends.” How can we measure “more” time? This fails to provide a black-and-white action that you can take toward accomplishing your goal. Instead, be specific and drill down with something like, “I will have a 15-minute phone call with two friends every week.”

Grounding your outcomes in others' reactions. Does your resolution depend on others' behavior for you to be successful? For example, if you resolve to “Accept (and follow through with) one social invitation each week,” you are wholly dependent on others inviting you out to achieve your goal. Instead, try something like, “I will work to participate in one new social event every week.” This leaves room for *you* to do the inviting. Take control!

Setting lofty goals to be achieved in a short amount of time. One example of this might be, “I will make 5 new friends by the end of the month.” Why add unnecessary pressure by applying arbitrary goal posts to something that may need to unfold more organically over time? Instead, try something like, “When I meet new women I like, I will commit to following up with them within the week in order to keep momentum.”



CHAPTER 05

THE ASSESSMENT: IDENTIFYING YOUR 2025 FRIENDSHIP INTENTIONS



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1. When it comes to making new friends, which thought is most prevalent in your mind?

- A-I feel like it may be too late for me to find “my people” at this stage in my life.
- B-I’m not confident in my ability to start interesting conversations with new people.
- C-I feel comfortable meeting new people, but I’m not sure I’d be able to keep the momentum after the first interaction.
- D-I can make new friends easily, but I’d be worried that as soon as we have one tense moment or subtle conflict, it wouldn’t last.

2. In which of the following areas do you have the least confidence?

- A-Believing that I’m worthy of good friendships and that I actually have something special to offer others.
- B-Knowing which people are worth investing in and which I shouldn’t waste time on.
- C-My ability to make time to consistently keep up with friends with everything else I have going on in my life.
- D-Expressing my boundaries and true feelings when a friend says / does something that makes me uncomfortable



3. Which of the following statements would your friends say most applies to you?

- A-I can sometimes be too “in my head.”
- B-I’m good with people once I get to know them, but the beginning stages of starting and maintaining conversations makes me a little nervous.
- C-I sometimes cancel plans, and then later regret not going.
- D-I sometimes “people-please” with friends because I don’t want to rock the boat or cause unnecessary drama.

4. Which of the following statements best expresses your main “friendship fear” for the new year?

- A-I won’t be able to gather the courage and confidence I need to begin putting myself out there to make new friends.
- B-I’m not going to be able to find “my people.”
- C-The status quo in my current friendships will stay the same, and we won’t go deeper and closer the way I really want to.
- D-I’ll still be suppressing an issue I have with a friend because I don’t know how to bring it up with her.



5. If you could get one friendship “re-do” for 2024, what would it be?

- A-I would have been more intentional about working on myself so that I could be in a better mental space to make friends.
- B-I would have followed through with more opportunities to connect with other women.
- C- I would’ve been a better friend in general.
- D- I would have had a “hard conversation” with a friend that I love.

MOSTLY A’s- You may be struggling with mindsets and personal complexes that are getting in the way of you creating (and sustaining) platonic relationships. Consider beliefs you have that may be limiting your capacity to pursue the kinds of friendships you desire. Some common false mindsets include ideas about who you are and what you offer; the overall friendship landscape; and believing that others aren’t able to meet your expectations or won’t share your interest in intentional friendship. Ask yourself: “Where did these messages come from, and how is my life being limited by believing them?”



MOSTLY B's- You may be struggling with connection. This includes meeting and interacting with new people and seizing opportunities to begin friendships with new people. If you're unsure about how to initiate interesting conversations or engage with potential friends, remember that it can be learned! The worst thing you could do is buy into the lie that some people have it, and some people don't. It's both an art and a science.

To begin learning how to make new friends, consider taking our course or joining our group coaching program for a more in-depth experience.

MOSTLY C's - Your main area of focus should be momentum. This refers to your ability to either 1. Move superficial acquaintances into friendship territory or 2. Creating more depth in the friendships you already have. Either way, it's important to have a meaningful connection with the people in your life so that you are not surrounded by a network of surface-level relationships. All of the research about friendship and connection speaks to the quality of our relationships, and creating depth is a part of creating the quality that brings us the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of friendship overall.



MOSTLY D's- You may need to give special attention to friendship conflict. It's important to note that (healthy) conflict is inevitable in any human relationship. The key is how we navigate those tensions because – believe it or not – conflict can actually function in a way that brings us closer together! If you avoid hard conversations, refuse to voice boundaries, and struggle to take constructive feedback from people you love, you may be missing out on the kind of platonic intimacy you desire.

Women who struggle in this area benefit most from a personal coaching session. [LEARN MORE.](#)

This is a short assessment to reveal areas of your friendships that could use a little more attention. It's okay if your results are a bit all over the place; it shows that friendships should be a central focus in your life in the new year! And fortunately, with communities like Friend Forward, you don't have to wonder where to start or what to do – helping you plan organized and specific “next steps” is literally what we do.

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Women who struggle in this area benefit most from a personal one-on-one 75-minute coaching session. [Learn more here.](#)

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TIME TO GET INTENTIONAL

Now that you understand how to create resolutions for your platonic friendships, write a few of your own below:

NEED MORE INSIGHT & SUPPORT?

SPEND SOME TIME WITH US.

Our one-on-one sessions are personalized to your specific goals, personality, and friendship history. After each session, you will receive a transcript, notes, a personalized 21-day plan, a physical book related to your specific friendship issue, and a follow-up email.

We also offer courses (new!) and group coaching programs-- all designed with you in mind. To learn more about how we can support you on your relational health journey, send us a message at hello@betterfemalefriendships.com.

GET MORE SUPPORT.

