

英 语 文 化 系 列 读 物

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A Reader of Culture in English

丛书主编 / 杨敏 李敏

人生花絮

Colorful Life



石油大学出版社

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英语文化系列读物 (IX)
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本书主编：李 敏 郝秀丽 惠 敏

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Interactions

交 往

Friends, Good Friends ——And Such Good Friends

【导读：这篇短文会帮你找到众多的朋友，让您时时处处沉浸在浓浓的友情中。】

Women are friends, I once would have said, when they **W** totally love and support and trust each other, and bare to each other the secrets of their souls, and run — no questions asked — to help each other, and tell harsh truths to each other (no, you can't wear that dress unless you lose ten pounds first) when harsh truths must be told.

Women are friends, I once would have said, when they share the same affection for **Ingmar Bergman**, plus train rides, cats, warm rain, **charades**, **Camus**, and hate with equal ardor **Newark** and **Brussels sprouts** and Lawrence Welk and camping.

In other words, I once would have said that a friend is a friend all the way, but now I believe that's a narrow point of view. For the friendships I have and the friendships I see are conducted at many levels of intensity, serve many different functions, meet different needs and range from those as all-the-way as the friendship of the soul sisters mentioned above to that of the most **nonchalant** and casual playmates.

Consider these varieties of friendship:

1. Convenience friends. These are the women with whom, if our paths weren't crossing all the time, we'd have no particular reason to be friends: a next-door neighbor, a woman in our car pool, the mother of one of our children's closest friends or maybe some mommy with whom we serve juice and cookies each week at the Glenwood Co-op Nursery.

Convenience friends are convenient indeed. They'll lend us their cups and silverware for a party. They'll drive our kids to soccer when we're sick. They'll take us to pick up our car when we need a lift to the garage. They'll even take our cats when we go on vacation. **As we will for them.**

But we don't, with convenience friends, ever come too close or tell too much; we maintain our public face and emotional distance. "which means," says Elaine, "that I'll talk about being overweight but not about being depressed. Which means I'll admit being mad but not blind with rage. Which means I might say that **we're pinched this month** but never that I'm worried sick over money."

But which doesn't mean that there isn't sufficient value to be found in these friendships of mutual aid, in convenience friends.

2. Special-interest friends. These friendships aren't intimate, and they needn't involve kids or silverware or cats. Their value lies in some interest jointly shared. And so we may have an office friend or a **yoga** friend or a tennis friend or a friend from the Women's Democratic Club.

"I've got one woman friend," says Joyce, "who likes, as I do, to take psychology courses. Which makes it nice for me—and nice for her. It's fun to go with someone you know and it's fun to discuss what you've learned, driving back from the classes." And for the most part, she says, that's all they discuss.

"I'd say that what we're doing is *doing* together, not being together," Suzanne says of her **Tuesday-doubles friends**. "It's mainly a tennis relationship, but we play together well. And I guess we all need to have a couple of playmates."

My playmate is a shopping friend, a woman of marvelous taste, a woman who knows exactly *where* to buy *what*, and furthermore is a woman who always knows beyond a doubt what one ought to be buying. I don't have the time to keep up with what's new in eyeshadow, **hemlines** and shoes and whether the smock look is in or finished already. But since (on, shame!) I care a lot about eyeshadow, hemlines and shoes, and since I *don't want* to wear smocks if the smock look is finished, I'm very glad to have a shopping friend.

3. Historical friends. We all have a friend who knew us when... maybe way back in Miss Meltzer's second grade, when our family lived in that three-room flat in **Brooklyn**, when our dad was out of work for seven months, when our brother Allie got in that fight where they had to call the police, when our sister married the **endodontist** from **Yonkers**

and when, the morning after we lost our **virginity**, she was the first, the only, friend we told.

The years have gone by and we've gone separate ways and we've little in common now, but we're still an intimate part of each other's past. And so whenever we go to Detroit we always go to visit this friend of our girlhood. Who knows **how we looked before our teeth were straightened**. Who knows **how we talked before our voice got unBrooklyned**. Who knows what we ate before we learned about **artichokes**. And who, by her presence, puts us in touch with an earlier part of ourself, a part of ourself it's important never to lose.

"What this friend means to me and what I mean to her," says Grace, "**is having a sister without sibling rivalry**. We know the texture of each other's lives. She remembers my grandmother's cabbage soup. I remember the way her uncle played the piano. There's simply no other friend who remembers those things."

4. Crossroads friends. Like historical friends, our crossroads friends are important for *what was* — for the friendship we shared at a crucial, now past, time of life. A time, perhaps, when we roomed in college together; or worked as eager young **singles** in the Big City together; or went together, as my friend Elizabeth and I did through **pregnancy**, birth and that scary first year of new motherhood.

Crossroads friends forge powerful links, **links strong e-**

nough to endure with not much more contact than once-a-year letters at Christmas. And out of respect for those crossroads years, for those dramas and dreams we once shared, we will always be friends.

5. Cross-generational friends. Historical friends and crossroads friends seem to maintain a special kind of intimacy—**dormant** but always ready to be revive—and though we may rarely meet, whenever we do connect, it's personal and intense. Another kind of intimacy exists in the friendships that form across generations in what one woman calls her daughter-mother and her mother-daughter relationships.

Evelyn's friend is her mother's age—"but I share so much more than I ever could with my mother"—a woman she talks to of music, of books and of life. "What I get from her is the benefit of her experience. What she gets—and enjoys—from me is a youthful perspective. It's a pleasure for both of us."

I have in my own life a precious friend, a woman of 65 who has lived very hard, who is wise, who listens well; who has been where I am and can help me understand it; and who represents not only an ultimate ideal mother to me but also the person I'd like to be when I grow up.

In our daughter role we tend to do more than our share of **self-revelation**; in our mother role we tend to receive what's revealed. It's another kind of pleasure—playing wise mother to a questing younger person. It's another very lovely kind of friendship.

6. Part-of-a-couple friends. Some of the women we call our friends we never see alone — we see them as part of a couple at couples' parties. And though we share interests in many things and respect each other's views, we aren't moved to deepen the relationship. Whatever the reason, a lack of time or — and this is more likely — **a lack of chemistry**, our friendship remains in the context of a group. But the fact that our feeling on seeing each other is always, "I'm so glad she's here" and the fact that we spend half the evening talking together says that this too, in its own way, counts as a friendship.

7. Men who are friends. I wanted to write just of women friends, but the women I've talked to won't let me — they say I must mention man-woman friendships too. For these friendships can be just as close and as dear as those that we form with women. Listen to Lucy's description of one such friendship:

"We've found we have things to talk about that are different from what he talks about with my husband and different from what I talk about with his wife. So sometimes we call on the phone or meet for lunch. There are similar intellectual interests — we always pass on to each other the books that we love — but there's also something tender and caring too."

In a **couple of crises**, Lucy says, "he offered himself, for talking and for helping. and when someone died in his family he wanted me there. The sexual, **flirty** part of our

Friends, Good Friends——And Such Good Friends

friendship is very small, but *some*—just enough to make it fun and different.” She thinks—and I agree—that the sexual part, though small is always *some*, is always there when a man and a woman are friends.

It’s only in the past few years that I’ve made friends with men, in the sense of a friendship that’s *mine*, not just part of two couples. And achieving with them the ease and the trust I’ve found with women friends has value indeed. Under the dryer at home last week, putting on **mascara** and rouge, I comfortably sat and talked with a fellow named Peter. Peter, I finally decided, could handle the shock of me minus mascara under the dryer. Because we care for each other. Because we’re friends.

8. There are medium friends, and pretty good friends, and very good friends indeed, and these friendships are defined by their level of intimacy. And what we’ll reveal at each of these levels of intimacy is **calibrated** with care. We might tell a medium friend, for example, that yesterday we had a fight with our husband. And we might tell a pretty good friend that this fight with our husband made us so mad that we slept on the couch. And we might tell a very good friend that the reason we got so mad in that fight that we slept on the couch had something to do with that girl who works in his office. But it’s only to our very best friends that we’re willing to tell all, to tell what’s going on with that girl in his office.

The best of friends, I still believe, totally love and sup-

port and trust each other, and bare to each other the secrets of their souls, and run — no questions asked — to help each other, and tell harsh truths to each other when they must be told.

But we needn't agree about everything (only 12-year-old girl friends agree about *everything*) to tolerate each other's point of view. To accept without judgment. To give and to take without ever keeping score. And to *be* there, as I am for them and as they are for me, to comfort our sorrows, to celebrate our joys.

Notes:

1. **Ingmar Bergman**: 伯格曼(1918~),瑞典电影导演。
2. **charade** [ʃə'ra:d]: *n.* 字谜游戏。
3. **Camus**: 加缪(1913~1960),法国小说家、戏剧家、评论家。
4. **Newark**: 纽瓦克(美国新泽西州东北部港市)。
5. **Brussels sprouts**: *n.* 汤菜,甘蓝。
6. **nonchalant** [ˈnɒnʃələnt]: *a.* 漠不关心的,无动于衷的。
7. **As we will for them**: 我们也会为她们做这一切。**We're pinched this month**: 这个月我们手头有点紧。
8. **yoga** ['jəʊgə]: 瑜伽功。
9. **Tuesday-doubles friends**: 星期二打双打时的朋友。
10. **hemline** ['hemlain]: *n.* (裙子等的)底边离地高度。
11. **Brooklyn**: 布鲁克林区(美国纽约市行政区名)。
12. **endodontist** [ˌendədɒntɪst]: *n.* 牙髓病医生。
13. **Yonkers**: 扬克斯(美国纽约州东南部城市)。
14. **virginity** [ˌvɜːdʒɪnəti]: *n.* 处女。
15. **how we looked before our teeth were straightened**: 我们在牙齿矫

正直之前长得是什么样子的。

16. **how we talked before our voice got unBrooklyned**: 我们改了布鲁克林口音前是怎么谈话的。
17. **artichoke** ['ɑ:tɪtʃəʊk]; *n.* 洋姜。
18. **is having a sister without sibling rivalry**: 既有了姐姐又不存在姊妹相争。
19. **single**; *n.* 单身女子(或男子)。
20. **pregnancy** ['pregnənsɪ]; *n.* 怀孕。
21. **links strong enough to endure with not much more contact than once-a-year letters at Christmas**: 只靠一年一次的圣诞节通信就能维系的牢固关系。
22. **dormant** ['dɔ:mənt]; *a.* 沉睡的。
23. **self-revelation**; *n.* 自我揭示, 自己内心情感的流露。
24. **a lack of chemistry**: 缺少人际感情, 缺少感情关系。
25. **a couple of crises**: 感情出现危机的夫妻。
26. **flirty** ['flɜ:ti]; *a.* 调情的。
27. **mascara** [mæ'skɑ:rə]; *n.* 睫毛膏。
28. **calibrate** ['kælibreit]; *v.* 测定, 标定。

Dad and the Revenooers

【导读：读完这篇文章，你能分享做父母的喜悦吗？】

The record shows that George Dale Mirical and Mary Octavia Hartwick were married on January 30, 1954. Upon that union, Mary's initials were changed to M. O. M. , and 15 months later, on Easter Sunday, her first son was born.

My parents didn't plan to have many kids. But their son was followed by six daughters. Then they got five more sons and five more daughters. "What's better family planning than to have one child every year?" Dad asked.

Just before their 17th and last child was born in 1974, the **Illinois Department of Revenue** sent my parents a notice:

Internal Revenue Service information indicates that you claimed six more exemptions on your 1971 Illinois tax return than on your federal return. Based on this information, your Illinois tax was recalculated. You are consequently being assessed \$ 211.

Dad, a **certified public accountant**, was furious. Would he make a mistake on his own tax return? Mom was amused. It reminded her of the time someone saw all her kids in the back yard and accused her of running an illegal nurs-

ery.

Dad gradually yielded to Mom's enjoyment of the irony. One night he came home from work with a **sheepish** grin and handed her a piece of paper. "I wrote a letter," he said. "What do you think?"

Mom noticed his impish look and peered at the scribbled statement addressed to the Director of the Department of Revenue:

Dear Sir:

*We received your communication informing me and my wife that, according to the federal government, we did not have 15 children in 1971 as reported on our state **income-tax return**, but only had nine children and therefore owe the state \$211.*

*I wish to thank you very much for this information. There has always been disagreement between my wife and me about the exact number. We just had our 20th wedding anniversary, and now she says we have 16, **all conceived right and proper after we were married.***

*Now I agree with you and the federal government that that's a bit unbelievable. The trouble is that **though my wife ain't too bright about some things, she can count pretty good.** It may be some pesky neighbor has slipped a few of his into my house and I been boardin' them.*

*I'm at a loss as to how to solve our problem. I'd count them myself but **I can't get'em to stand still long enough in one place.** The one thing I can say for sure is that there does*