

Why you should reach out to old friends

CNN Article

People often underestimate how much friends and old acquaintances appreciate hearing from them. Thinking of reaching out to old friends but nervous it will be awkward or that they won't appreciate it? You should make those phone calls or send a text or email, according to new research.

[A study](#) published July 11 in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that people often underestimate how much their friends and old acquaintances appreciate hearing from them.

"If there's been someone that you've been hesitating to reach out to, that you've lost touch with perhaps, you should go ahead and reach out, and they're likely to appreciate it much more than you think," said Peggy Liu, the study's lead author. Liu is the Ben L. Fryrear chair in marketing and associate professor of business administration at the University of Pittsburgh's Katz Graduate School of Business.

The researchers conducted a series of 13 experiments with more than 5,900 participants to see if people could accurately estimate how much their friends value them reaching out and what forms of communication make the biggest impact. In these experiments, reaching out was defined as a phone call, text, email, note or small gift.

The experiments found that initiators significantly underestimated the recipient's reaction to the check-in.

"It's often less about these kinds of grand overtures that we can make in our relationships and more about the small moments of letting a friend know that we're thinking of them," said Miriam Kirmayer, a clinical psychologist and friendship expert who was not involved in the study.

A recipient appreciated the communication more when it was surprising, such as when it was from someone the recipient did not regularly contact or when the participant and recipient did not consider themselves to be close friends, the study found.

"When you feel that sense of positive surprise," Liu said, "it really further boosts the appreciation that you feel."