

Beyond “The One”: The Case for Nurturing Deep Friendships

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When you imagine the person who will most
shape the quality of your life at 70...

who
comes
to mind?





"An empowering quest toward our greatest need: meaningful human connection."
—JAY SHETTY, bestselling author of *Think Like a Monk*

The Good Life

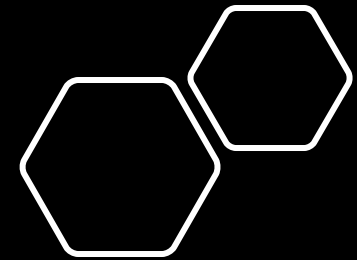


LESSONS FROM THE WORLD'S LONGEST
SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF HAPPINESS

CREATE A MORE MEANINGFUL
AND SATISFYING LIFE

Robert Waldinger, MD
and Marc Schulz, PhD

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



Impact of Work on Personal Relationships and Physician Well-being

“In the past year, my job contributed to me feeling more isolated or detached from the people who are important to me.”



The “Other Significant Other”

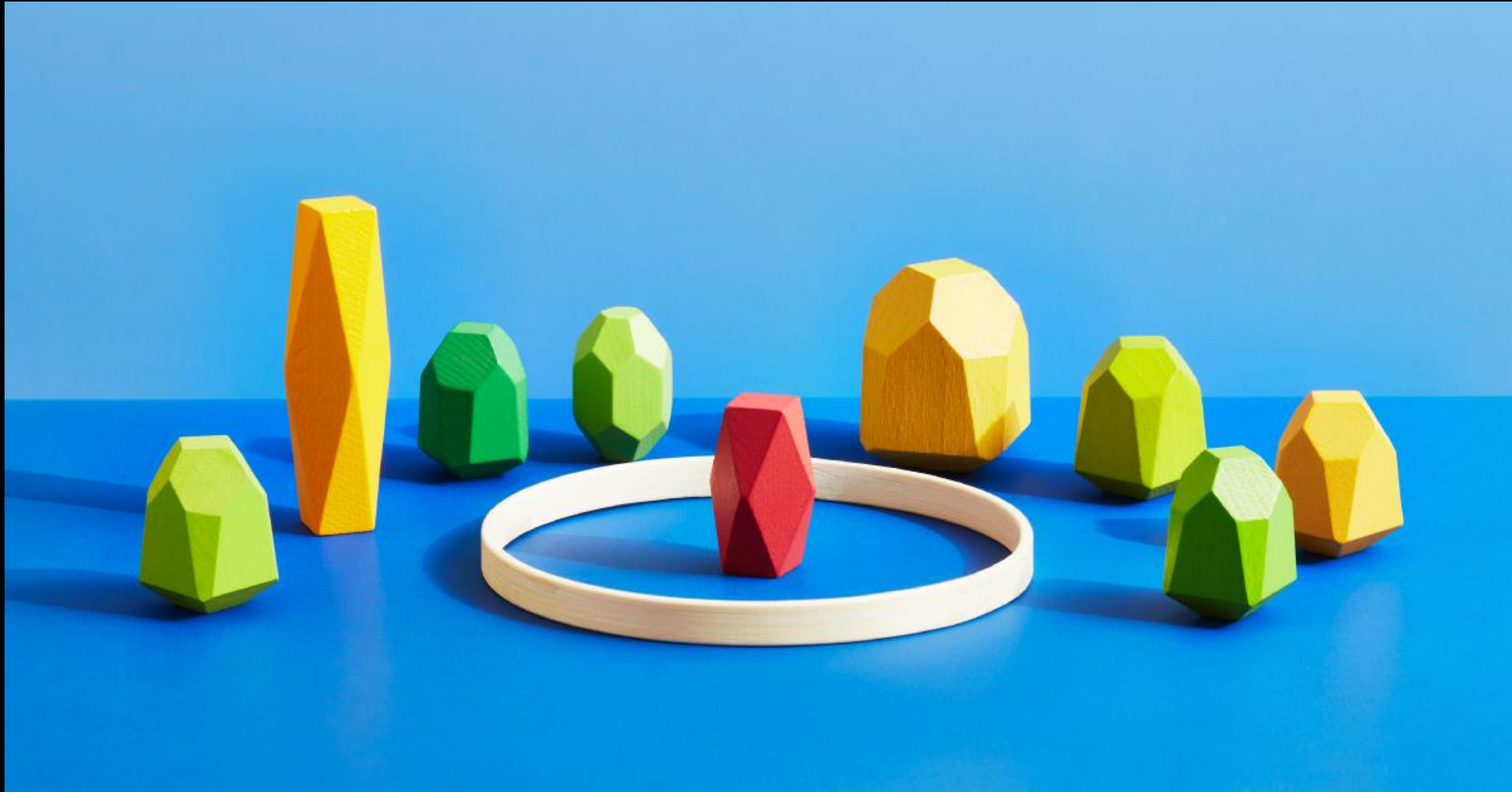
NATIONAL BESTSELLER

“Cohen’s moving, intimate portraits of people in unusually devoted friendships upend our cultural narratives. . . . There are far more pathways to deep connection and fulfillment than we’ve been made to believe.” —LORI GOTTLIEB

The *OTHER* SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

REIMAGINING
LIFE with
FRIENDSHIP
at the CENTER





https://www.harvardbusiness.org/insight/new-to-leadership-heres-how-to-address-loneliness/?st_source=ai_mode#:~:text=The%20adage%2C%20%E2%80%9CIt's%20lonely%20at,the%20loneliness%20epidemic%20quickly.%E2%80%9D%5B

The Data: Friendship as Protective Infrastructure

FRIENDSHIP = is = PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT ♥



BUILDS
CONFIDENCE



A SAFE PLACE
TO BE YOU



HELPS YOU
HEAL



BOOSTS
HAPPINESS



ALWAYS IN
YOUR CORNER

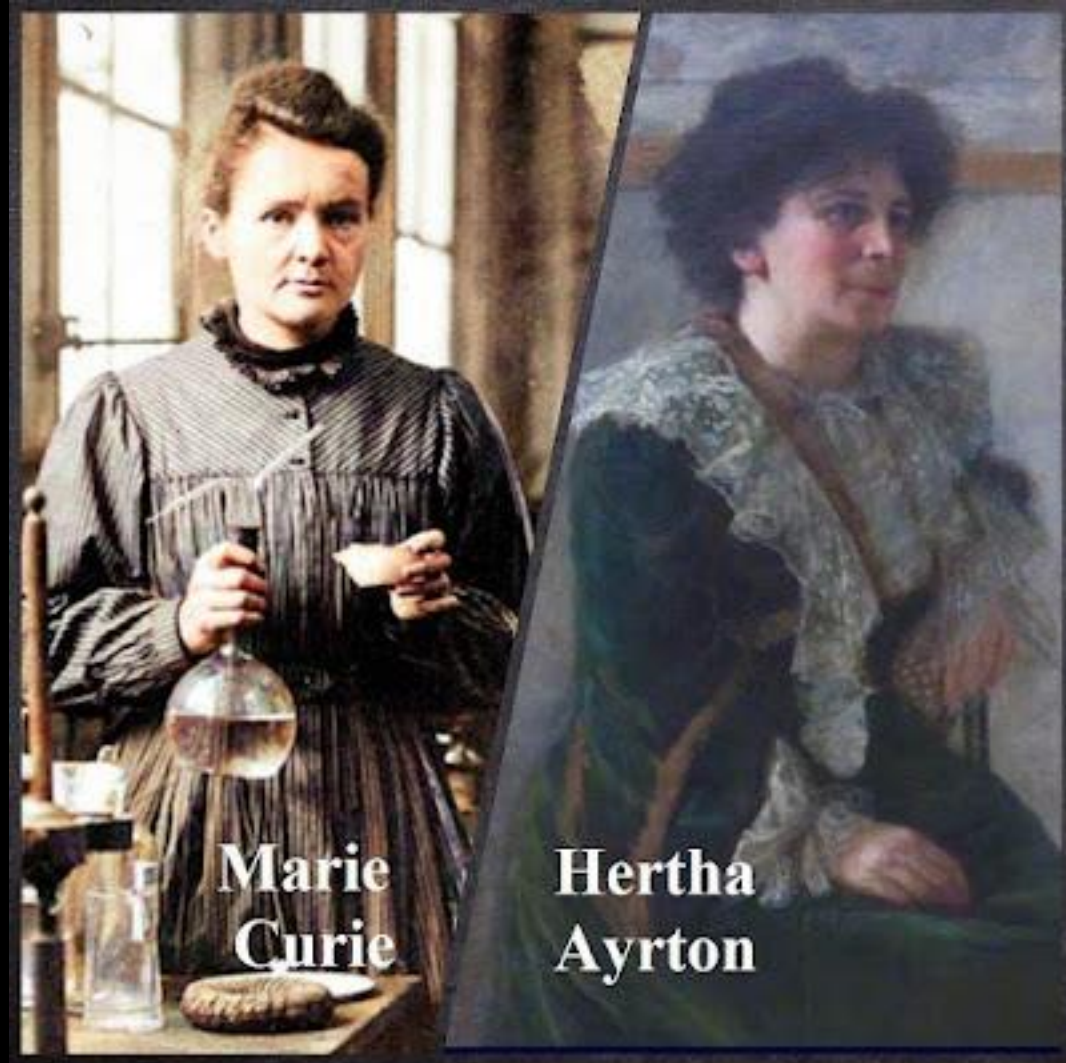


REMINDS YOU
YOU'RE NOT
ALONE



WE'VE GOT EACH OTHER. ♥ WE'VE GOT THIS.

Historical Proof: Women Scientists and the Power of Friendship



lassie. I suspected this year ago, when
we were here Kaiser's worth pamphlet -
I care of it when I read Ray Government
to, so her little number is very
come to me because
er & am very a
Dear
that I felt my
on of life -
and - I am
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ent. - The
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ee service the
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the hints that come
be me rejoice that
where I have no wish to enter society
do not care for the people sufficiently

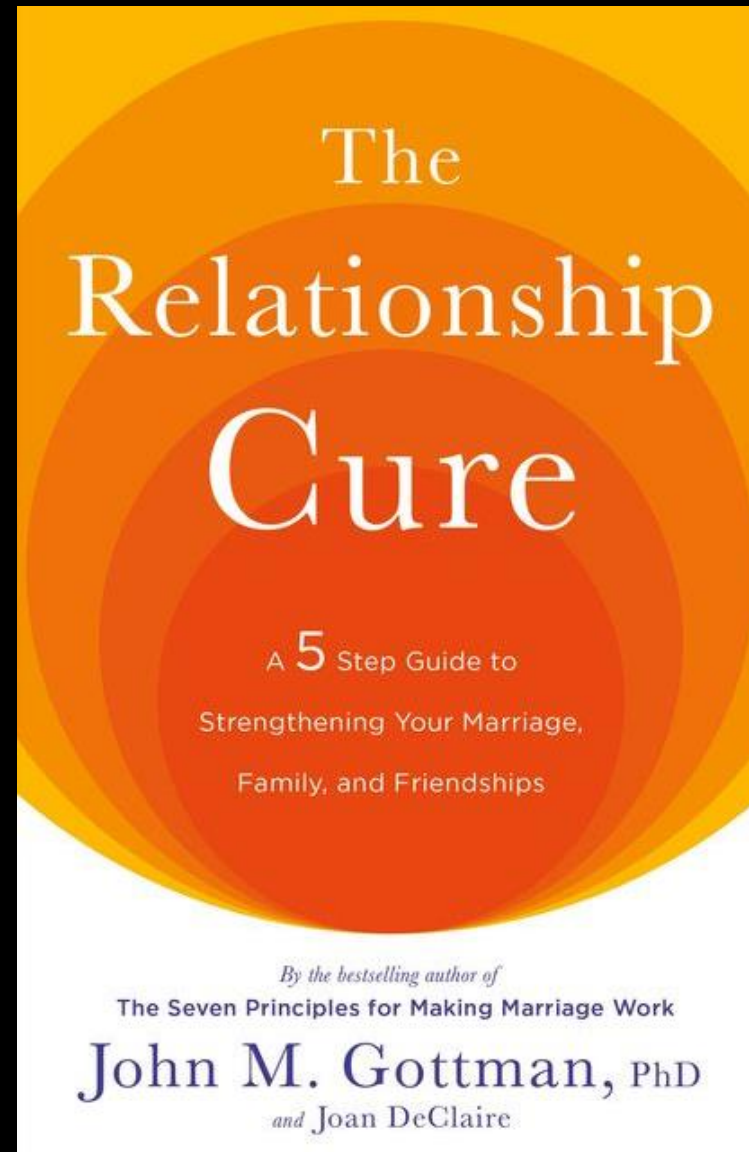


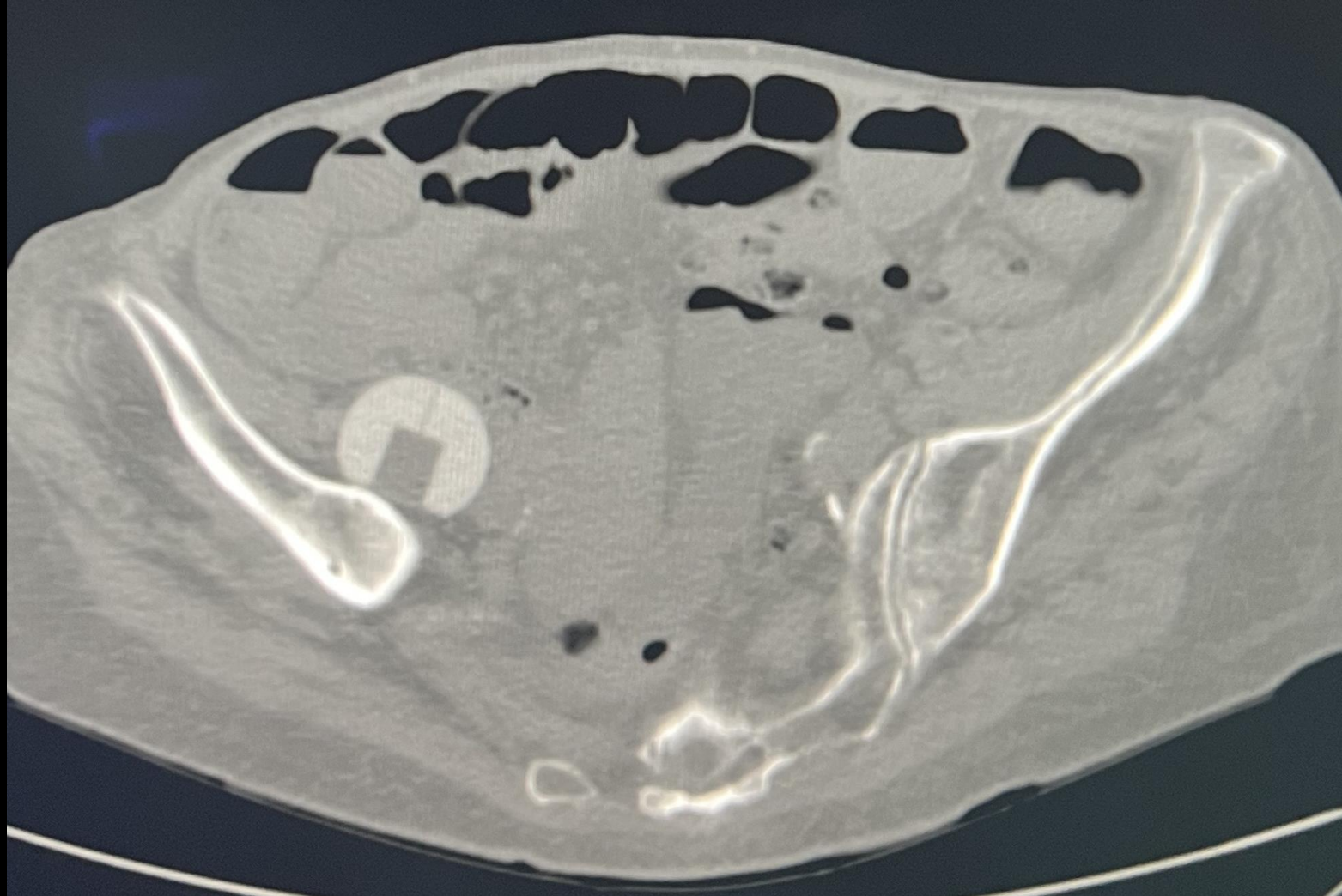
Now I write to you from our new
abode - 126 Second Avenue, in
we have with one week. The
mass
plumbers paint
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the basement to the street for dis





4. Micro-Skills: Gottman and the Art of Turning Toward





Callaghan JJ, McAndrew C, Boese CK, Forest E. Intrapelvic migration of the trial femoral head during total hip arthroplasty: is retrieval necessary? A report of four cases. Iowa Orthop J. 2006;26:60-2. PMID: 16789451; PMCID: PMC1888581.

NURTURE FRIENDSHIP.

It Makes Life Better.

Strong friendships don't just happen.
We grow them—together.

THINGS FRIENDS CAN DO TOGETHER



Visit

Explore new places or enjoy old favorites together.



Exercise

Move together. It's good for body and bond.



Volunteer

Make a difference side by side.



Celebrate Successes

Cheer each other on and honor wins—big and small.



Host a Party

Gather, laugh, and make memories.



Collaborate on a Project

Create something meaningful together.

THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR FRIEND



Say Thanks

A sincere thank-you means more than you know.



Return Borrowed Items

Little things show you care.



Remember Their Birthday

A simple wish can brighten their day.



Listen

Be present. Let them feel heard and understood.



Notice

Pay attention to the little things.



Say Positive Things About Their Kids

Affirming their kids affirms them.



Friendship is a two-way gift.
Let's give it, grow it, and keep showing up for each other.

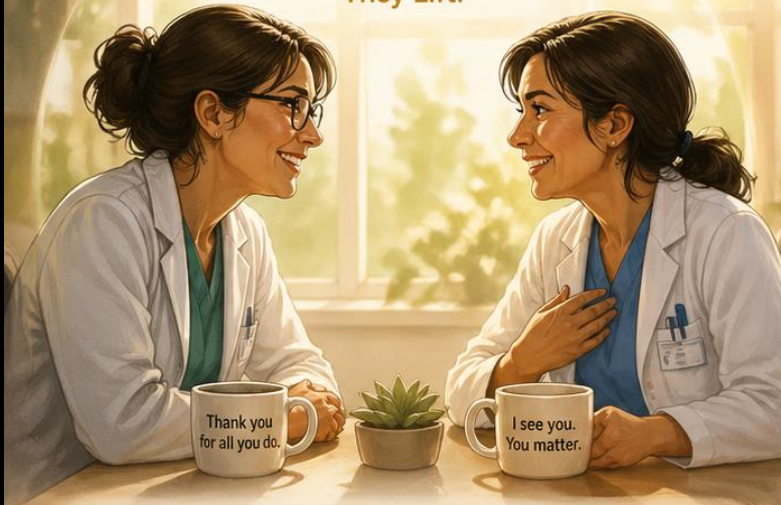
5. David Brooks and the Art of Knowing a Person

ILLUMINATORS vs. DIMINISHERS

The Choice We Make in Every Interaction

ILLUMINATORS

Make Others Feel Seen.
They Lift.



-  See their strengths.
Notice and name them.
-  Affirm their worth.
Appreciate effort and character.
-  Bring out the best.
Encourage growth and possibility.
-  Make them feel larger.
Help them feel more capable,
more coherent, more connected.





Illuminators
expand
people's sense
of themselves
and their
future.



DIMINISHERS

Make Others Feel Small.
They Shrink.

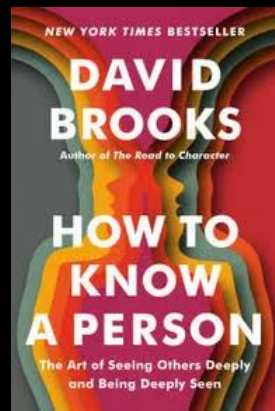


-  Overlook the good.
Focus on flaws and mistakes.
-  Undermine confidence.
Criticize, compare, or dismiss.
-  Limit their potential.
Doubt, micromanage, or control.
-  Make them feel smaller.
They shrink, withdraw,
or stop trying.

Diminishers
shrink
people's sense
of themselves
and their
future.



WE ALL HAVE A CHOICE. ❤️ LET'S CHOOSE TO ILLUMINATE.



THE GUNNER



I'm going to be the youngest chair of Cardiothoracic Surgery on the Eastern Seaboard. And if you stand in my way, I may have to kill you.

clenched fists of determination

clenched buttocks of anality

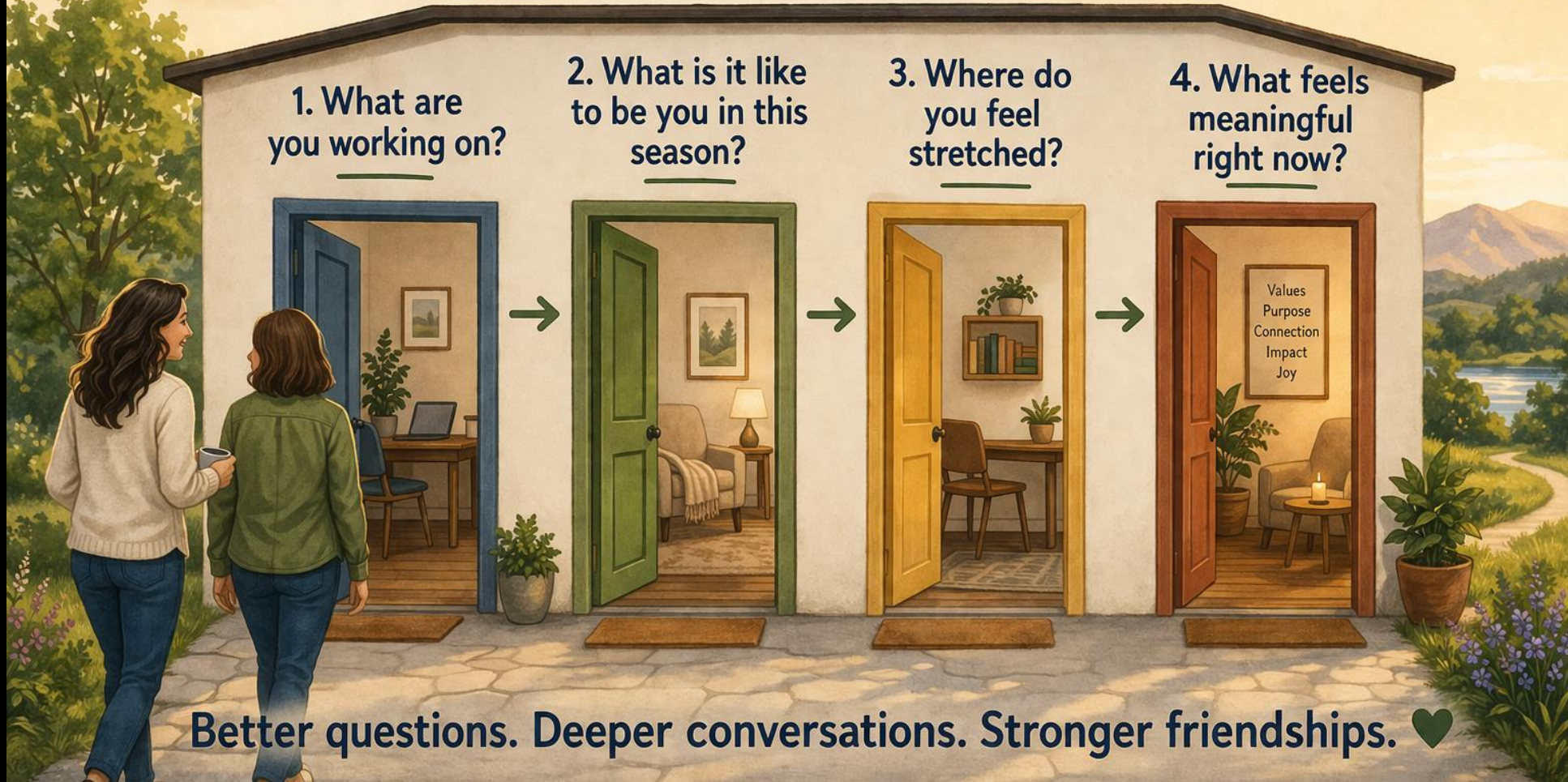




FRIENDSHIP in MIDLIFE

From surface to soul. From questions to connection.

Ask questions that move from the exterior to the interior.



1. What are you working on?

2. What is it like to be you in this season?

3. Where do you feel stretched?

4. What feels meaningful right now?

Values
Purpose
Connection
Impact
Joy

Better questions. Deeper conversations. Stronger friendships. ❤️

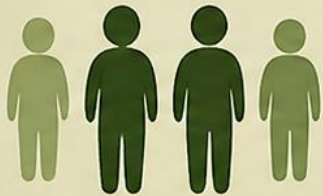
ASK POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Create Conversations That Matter

WILL WISE
CHAD LITTLEFIELD

6. Strategic Cross-Generational Design

**SOCIAL NETWORKS
BECOME SMALLER
& MORE SELECTIVE**



Fewer but deeper connections.

**PARENTING
DEMANDS
DECREASE**



More time and energy come back.

**ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS
STABILIZE OR
RESTRUCTURE**



Partnerships deepen, evolve, or take new forms.

**CAREERS
PEAK OR
PLATEAU**



A sense of mastery—
or a pause
for what's next.

Friendship Strategy

3 + 3 + 3

Cross-Generational Friendships

Connection across ages. Wisdom across stages.



Normalize developmental transitions.

They make change feel more natural—and less isolating.



Expand possibility.

They show you different paths, choices, and ways forward.



Reduce catastrophic thinking.

They provide perspective, reassurance, and hope.



When you see someone five years ahead surviving what you fear, your nervous system settles. ❤️

7. Gottman Meets Radiology: A Field Manual

- Notice bids (emails, comments, invitations).
- Respond positively at least 5:1 compared to critical remarks.
- Repair quickly after conflict.
- Express admiration explicitly.

You have a gift
for seeing people.

You listen in a
way that makes
people feel heard.

You have a
calm that
inspires
confidence.

Your perspective
always helps me
see more clearly.

I'm grateful for
your guidance
and support.

You have integrity.

in others.

You lead with
both strength
and kindness.

You show up.
It matters.

You're braver
than you know.

You make
hard things
feel possible.

Thank you for
believing in me.

I admire how
you handled
that conflict.

You handle pressure
with grace.

You create
space for others
to shine.

You are
making an
impact.

You turned a
tough situation
into progress.

I trust your
judgment.

Your leadership
steadied that meeting.

Friendship Dates

Because connection doesn't happen by accident.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28	29	30	1 Coffee with Maya 8:00 am 	2	3 Lunch with Jess 12:30 pm 	4
5	6 Walk & Talk with Sarah 7:00 am 	7	8	9 Friend Call (Real one!) 7:00 pm 	10	11 Museum + Lunch with Dad 
12	13	14 Check in with Priya 6:30 pm 	15	16	17 Virtual Wine Night 8:00 pm 	18
19 Hike with Alex 10:00 am 	20	21	22 Team dinner + old friends 7:00 pm 	23	24	25 Brunch with Lina 
26	27 Gratitude text to 3 friends 	28	29	30 End of month: Call a friend just because 	31	1

Block it. Protect it. Prioritize it. Friendship is an investment in a better life. 

The Midlife Opportunity





We do not advance alone.
We advance in *constellations*.

