

Opinion: When friends are 'like family'

By Deborah Tannen, *New York Times*

"My friends are the sisters I was meant to have," a woman told me. Another said that her friends are more precious than her sisters because they remember things from her past that her sisters don't and can't, since they weren't there. And a man commented that he didn't enjoy a particular friend's company all that much, but it was beside the point: "He's family."

I interviewed over 80 people for a book I'm writing about friendship, and was struck by how many said that one or another friend is "like family."

These comments, and how people explained them, shed light on the nature of friendship, the nature of family, and something that lies at the heart of both: what it means to be close.

For friends, as for family, "close" is the holy grail of relationships. (In both contexts I often heard, "I wish we were closer" but never "I wish we weren't so close.")

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