1a A tradition in decline?

Reading friendships

1 Look at the photo. Then read the article. Which of the following statements best summarizes the difference in the French and American attitudes to friendships?

a Most Americans have a lot of close friends.
b Americans are friendly with everyone; the French only with a few people.
c The French view friendship as something superficial.

2 Read the article again. Choose the correct option (a–c).

1 Which of the following relationships does the author NOT mention?
a colleagues
b fellow travellers
c fellow shoppers

2 Psychologists believe that in modern society … have become weaker.
a family relationships
b friendships
c all relationships

3 According to the article, 25 per cent of Americans don't have … .
a strong family bonds
b a strong friendship
c any friends at all

4 Americans are known for being … people.
a lonely
b family-oriented
c friendly

5 French people are … about making friends.
a careful b worried c relaxed

6 The author thinks that in the West, we ignore the … of friendship.
a significance b qualities c security

3 Find nouns in the article which come from these adjectives.

1 true .....
2 strong .....
3 warm .....
4 long .....
5 deep .....

A tradition in decline?

Is intimate friendship a relationship that is dying out in modern society? In our busy lives, we have many acquaintances and friends – the people we work with, our neighbours, the people we chat to at the local shop and so on. But how many really close friendships can we count? The truth for most of us is probably not many. Some psychologists say that while we still value strong family bonds, in recent times, friendships have lost the strength and importance that they had in the past.

According to a study published recently in the USA, friendships in America have been declining in quality and quantity since at least 1985. The study claims that 25 per cent of Americans don't have anyone dependable, that they could call a close friend. Yet, on the surface, Americans seem extremely outgoing and friendly people. If you have ever visited the USA, you will be familiar with the warmth and hospitality that they show to complete strangers. Everyone can be treated as a 'buddy', even if they are just a casual acquaintance.

But in other cultures, acquaintances and friendships have different qualities. In France, for example, when you are trying to get to know a person, they may seem rather cautious or even unfriendly, and the length of time it takes to form a strong friendship seems greater than in other countries. This is because for the French there is still a clear distinction between a casual acquaintance and a true friend. Although France is changing and perhaps becoming more like America, there is no doubt that French people are still more private in their friendships and that they reserve real intimacy for their closest friends. This intimacy can be found in many non-Western cultures too, where great importance is attached to the quality and depth of friendships. It is something that many of us in the West have forgotten and need to rediscover.

buddy (n) /ˈbʌdi/ a friend (colloquial)
die out (v) /ˌdaɪ ˈaʊt/ disappear
intimacy (n) /ˈɪntɪməsi/ closeness in a relationship

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Grammar present tenses: simple, continuous and perfect

4 Look at the article. Find examples of the following.

1 two changing situations (present continuous)

_____

_____

2 three everyday activities (present simple)

_____

_____

3 two recent events with an impact on the present (present perfect simple)

_____

_____

4 one event that started in the past and continues to the present (present perfect continuous)

_____

5 Complete the questions from a survey on friendship. Use present tenses.

1 What person or people _____ (you / spend) most time with recently?

2 _____ (you / consider) this person or people to be close friends?

3 How many really close friends _____ (you / have)?

4 Do you think your friendship circle _____ (still / increase)?

5 _____ (you/make) any new friends in the past month?

6 How long _____ (you / know) your closest friend?

7 How often _____ (you / see) this person?

8 Generally, what qualities _____ (you / look for) in a friend?

Vocabulary friendships, describing character and phrasal verbs

6 Look at the article again. Find the adjectives that collocate with these words. You may use the adjectives more than once.

1 a(n) _____, _____, _____ friendship

2 a _____ bond

3 a _____, _____ friend

4 a _____ stranger

5 a _____ acquaintance

7 Which word in each group does NOT collocate with the single word next to it? Cross out the word.

1 (a) mutual *friend / respect / student / interest*

2 a fellow *student / companion / scientist / traveller*

3 a close *acquaintance / relationship / friend / relative*

4 a *flat / faithful / travel* companion

5 a(n) *odd / happy / blood* couple

6 a(n) *close / old / passing* friend

8 Complete the sentences using the most appropriate adjective. There are two extra adjectives.

considerate	dependable	energetic	good fun	
laid-back	outgoing	selfish	serious	shy	unreliable

1 He seems very ___*serious*___ on the surface, but actually he's really _____ when you get to know him.

2 She's not stressed about arrangements for the wedding. She's very _____ about it all.

3 I do like him, but he's so _____. He always forgets arrangements or cancels them at the last minute.

4 She's so _____. I don't know how she manages to do a full-time job, look after three children and write books at the same time.

5 How could two people be so different? His brother is very _____ – he never says a word, but Simon is the opposite – very _____ and loves to be the centre of attention.

6 She's such a _____ person. She not only bought a thank you present for us, she got presents for all the children too.

9 Choose the correct option to complete the phrasal verbs.

1 I used to hang *out with / around* John a lot at college because we were both keen swimmers.

2 I'm meeting *with / up with* a group of colleagues on Friday. Would you like to join us?

3 I don't get *off / on* very well with my new boss. He's really difficult to work with.

4 Do you want to come *across / round* to my house and watch the football? It starts at 8 p.m.

5 It's very important to stand *by / with* your friends when they are in trouble.

6 Some people are very good at keeping *up with / on with* their old friends. However, I've lost touch with practically all the people I knew at college.

7 Lina and I were friends at school, but when we met recently, we just seemed to pick *off / up* from where we left off twenty years ago.

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