

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

I. Read the article. Choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the article.

Do you have a large circle of friends? Well, lucky you! Believe it or not, many scientists now believe that people with lots of friends live 22% longer than those with hardly any friends. It's even been suggested that having lots of friends may make it less likely that you will catch a cold. I must say, I'm not so sure about that – doesn't spending a lot of time with other people mean it's more likely you'll get more colds?

It seems that having a supportive social network can result in less stress and therefore better health. Why should this be? Well, the fact is we're sociable animals. We have evolved to live in groups, and need others line 13 for our **survival**. It is genetic. So people with lots of social connections are more relaxed, easy-going, and have higher self-esteem – all of which are related to better health.

Although friends help us cope with stress, they can also cause it. Think about it – how do you feel when your best friend says something hurtful to you? People we really like can **wound** us more deeply than anyone when they make an insensitive comment, or let us down – because they mean so much more to us. So would we be healthier if we didn't have any friends at all? Definitely not. When it comes to circles of friends, bigger is better.

So what should you do if your social life isn't going as well as you want it to? The research here is helpful. For a start, don't underestimate the value of the line 28 humble acquaintance. Interacting with people you see often but don't count as friends – your local shopkeeper, or that person you say 'good morning' to at the bus stop every day – can have a positive **impact** on your well-being. The first step is to tell them something about yourself. But if you want to build deeper friendships, you need to give it more time. Studies have found that it takes about 50 hours of socializing to become 'casual friends' with someone, 90 hours to become what would be considered 'real friends', and a total of 200 hours to become 'close friends'.

And what makes close friends so close? The old saying 'opposites attract' couldn't be further from the truth. Researchers have known for a long time that people choose friends who are the same as them in lots of ways – age, education level, politics. In fact, recent brain research has found that close friends have almost identical brain patterns!

Generally speaking, females are better at friendships than males. In stressful situations girls (and women) protect and care for others, and look for others to support them. They listen to their female friends' problems and help come up with solutions. Boys (and men) **tend** not to do that, as male friendships are often more about helping out with practical problems, mending things and so on. Their friendships have less emotional content.

Whatever you think about the scientific research into friendship, it is an unfortunate truth that people don't have as many friends as they used to. Or perhaps that's as many real friends. People, especially young people, have a lot of online friends these days, but the number of people who feel they have someone they can talk to about important subjects has dropped a lot: by nearly one third in the last ten years. There could be many reasons for this sad **decline**, but to my mind, the most likely is the growth of the internet – both the time we all spend alone with our computers, tablets and phones, and the mistaken belief that we are satisfying our social nature with virtual friendships.



1 In the opening paragraph, the author shows his

- A trust in the findings of modern research.
- B concern about the consequences of loneliness.
- C suspicion that scientists might not always be correct.
- D interest in the relationship between friendship and health.

2 What does 'it' refer to in line 13?

- A the desire to be healthy
- B the necessity of relationships
- C the negative impact of evolution
- D the connection between stress and ill-health

3 When the author says 'humble acquaintance' in line 28, he/she means someone who

- A you see every day.
- B you don't know very well.
- C you meet through another friend.
- D you don't really want to be friends with.

4 What is most likely to produce a close friendship between two people?

- A a combination of opposing personality types
- B a willingness to share personal details
- C a large amount of time spent together
- D a similarity of many characteristics

5 Women's friendships are different from men's because women are

- A not interested in practical things.
- B more concerned with feelings.
- C more helpful in general.
- D better at fixing things.

6 What is the author's main point in the final paragraph?

- A Communication is much easier these days.
- B Technology is harmful to relationships.
- C Scientists are too optimistic.
- D True friendship is very rare.