Read the text. Use a dictionary if necessary but note that it is not essential to understand every word. Then answer the questions.

Good friends

Psychologists have long known that having a set of cherished companions is crucial to mental well-being. In addition, a recent study by Australian investigators concluded that our friends even help to prolong our lives. The scientists analyzed data from a decade-long survey called the Australian Longitudinal Study of Aging, which was initiated in 1992. It concentrated on the social environment, general health, lifestyle and age of death of 1,477 persons older than 70 years. Study participants were asked how much personal and telephone contact they had with friends, children, relatives and acquaintances.

Researchers were surprised to learn that friendships increased life expectancy to a far greater extent than, say, frequent contact with children and other relatives. This benefit held true even after these friends had moved away to another city and was independent of factors such as socioeconomic status, health and way of life.

What exactly underlies this effect on longevity? Apparently, the scientists posit, it is not merely the mutual buoying of spirits that occurs among associates. What is more important is that the support given and received by friends is voluntary and pleasurable and not just the result of a sense of duty or convention. In contrast to our own families, we are able to choose our friends.

According to the Australian scientists, the ability to have relationships with people to whom one is important has a positive effect on physical and mental health. Stress and the tendency toward depression are reduced, and behaviors that are damaging to health, such as smoking and drinking, occur less frequently. The investigators speculate that in times of calamity in particular, our support networks can raise our moods and feelings of self-worth and offer helpful strategies for dealing with difficult personal challenges.

1 Which words and expressions in the first paragraph could the following substitute for?

1 friends one loves and cares for
2 extremely important
3 extend
4 begun
5 focused
6 subjects

2 Find in the text a word which:

1 means 'people' (more formal)
2 means 'is the hidden cause of'
3 would be spelt differently in British English. How?
4 means a 'serious accident or very bad event'

3 Use words from the text to complete this table.

noun	*verb*	*adjective*
		conventional
help	help	
	expect	expectant
pleasure	please	

LIVEWORKSHEETS