

Relations, Friends, Acquaintances and Spiritual Companions

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

Cultivators of Patience. Our friendships rarely collapse in a moment. It takes time for the rot to creep in. Look back now on a friendship, whether with a close relation, friend, acquaintance or spiritual companion, that went off or worse. What were the initial strains? Where did the antagonism begin? Were we fully aware of it then? Or had it mushroomed unexpectedly into an argument? And after the argument was there an attempt at reconciliation? Was that really heart felt? Or was it a patch? A patch through which in time the sore began again to fester. Had you put yourself out for someone and they had not returned the favour when you needed them? Or was it you who had not come to their aid? Had they spoken a sharp word, a judgement, a dig which you took in good part? But they kept doing it. Little snidey remarks that finally got under your skin. Or were you the one doing that and didn't realise that your sarcasm was actually hurting, because they laughed. Was it a growing clash of opinions that at first were agreeing to differ, but then got a little edgy until excuses were made and meetings stopped? Was there envy which over time gathered an aversion towards the person and progressed into jealousy? Were you aware that it was jealousy and not that you just didn't like them anymore? Or was it that they were jealous of you and that you knew it, but didn't know how to work with it? Did a friend overstep a boundary, become too familiar? Presume. How did you react? Were you brusque? Did you get angry with them? Or was it you suddenly finding yourself 'told off'. I was once lodging with a longtime friend. He was on the telephone to his daughter. I had told him I was waiting for a phone call. As the time got closer, I shouted to remind him. Unfortunately, maybe because of my anxiety around losing the call, it sounded like a command. Well, that took a while to iron out. I. What about your spiritual teacher? Did you have a bad time with them? Are you still blaming them? Or if you took the role of guiding someone, are you truthful about the role you played in the breakup? Contemplating lost friendships is important for we are creatures of habit and tend to make the same mistakes over and over until we 'wake up'. Once we recognise what the mechanisms in us are that undermine friendships, whether they are our own characteristics or our reaction to such characteristics in others, we can become aware of the first signs and train ourselves to stop – even in mid-sentence – establish the appropriate attitude of goodwill.

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