

# QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

1. Describe a moment when you felt a spark with a stranger and knew you wanted to be friends.
2. We hear over and over again that the older you get, the harder it is to make friends and deepen new friendships. Why do you think that's such a common belief? Has it been true in your own life?
3. "Chosen family" is a term that originated in the LGBTQ community to describe kinship bonds outside one's family of origin. What are some of the ways our society could adapt to recognize the importance of friendship, and encourage friends to be a more formal part of each other's support system? How would the world be different if we recognized that friends play these important roles for each other?
4. Women aren't the only people who have Big Friendships, but we see far fewer cultural examples of men in intimate, healthy friendships. Why do you think that is?
5. How do you practice Shine Theory? Do the strategies in this book ring true to your experience, or has it looked different in your own life? Have you ever practiced Shine Theory with a member of this group?
6. "Stretching" is a metaphor for the ways we extend ourselves to keep a friendship strong through challenges and changes. Talk about one time you have stretched for a friend, and one time a friend has stretched for you.
7. Is this group a friendweb? How are you all connected to each other? (You might want to get a piece of paper and actually draw your web!)
8. How have you navigated friendships that cross deep differences in identity like race, gender, sexuality, and class? Have you ever felt dropped through the "trapdoor"?
9. What are some of the differences between how your friendships appear to others and how they feel on the inside? Have you ever made the mistake of seeing a friend's social media update and assuming you're all caught up on that friend's life?
10. Have you ever made the mistake of assuming a friend would react to something the same way you did?
11. Talk about a friendship you once had that has ended. (You don't have to name names!)
12. In the past, how have you dealt with conflict in your friendships?
13. Research shows that the "loneliness epidemic" isn't about having fewer friends—people report having the same number of friends as they did in past decades. It's about our struggles to stay connected with the friends we do have. Why do you think people report feeling more lonely these days?
14. How has the pandemic affected your friendships?
15. Describe a ritual you have in one of your Big Friendships. Describe a new ritual you would like to start.