

## Disagreements Between Friends Shouldn't End The Friendship

from the American Counseling Association

Relationships are important to all of us. While we might enjoy having a little "alone time" every now and then, the reality is that we all need interactions with other people on a regular basis.

What's important about our long-term relationships is not simply that we meet and talk with others, but that these are people we care about, with whom we share emotional ties, and to whom we turn for encouragement, support and advice.

The relationships that we consider special are usually with people with whom we share a number of similarities and/or life experiences. These relationships can result from marriage, business relationships or social interactions, but they rest on common foundations and are important to us and our overall well-being.

But even in the closest of relationships, whether romantic or between friends, there will still sometimes be areas of disagreement. An important element in establishing or maintaining a healthy, long-term relationship is how such disagreements are handled.

There are basic qualities that allow us to disagree without destroying a relationship. Qualities of honesty, openness and trust play important roles. When disagreements occur, it's essential to agree to be honest with one another and then to actually do just that. For a strong relationship to grow, both members of the relationship must commit to this goal.

This is sometimes called the "ABC" method of sustaining a relationship. The "A" stands for affirming the value of the relationship. That means the two of you agree that the relationship itself is more important than either of your views on any particular issue.

The "B" stands for behavior, for letting the other person know that when there are disagreements, you won't let them affect the basics of the relationship. It means that neither of you will set ultimatums or try to force your point of view on the other person.

The "C" stands for clarifying issues when there is a disagreement. Rather than your "interpreting" the words and actions of the other person, you have to be open and honest with that person and let him or her explain and clarify the intent and meaning of what has been said.

Long-term relationships are a vital part of a happy life. To make them last and grow takes work, and that means finding room within the relationship for the occasional disagreements that are naturally going to exist between any two people.

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