

The Values and Traits Behind My Best Relationships

What are the values you most look for when forming relationships?

Great question! Any answer I give here will be incomplete, but I have come to notice some patterns in my most valuable relationships. Certain values and traits also help me quickly pick out people I want in my “tribe.”

1. Courage

I am my best self when I am acting with courage and driving toward independence. Building the life I have right now required me to act with courage in uncomfortable situations. To maintain and grow that life, I have to maintain and grow my courage. I admire people who do that in their own lives. That’s why I want to be friends with brave people, and I typically find my most valuable friendships in people who have shown the courage to be different or take a different path.

Some of my friends have shown tremendous courage in leaving or questioning their religious backgrounds. Some have shown courage in dropping out of college or opting out college. One has started a business at the age of 19. One has left a job. One has moved across the country. These friends’ courage drives me on.

2. Intellect/Curiosity

I love learning. Most of what I enjoy doing revolves around ideas and discovery, from reading a book on psychology to exploring a new part of Atlanta to learning a new skill like blues dancing. Naturally, I want friends who are also turned outward (and inward) with curiosity. My best friends are able and willing to hold their own intellectually. They read. They consider big ideas. They strive for understanding. They’re the kind of people who will spend a Friday night making bacon and eggs and talking about ideas for hours.

3. Kindness/Respect

I grew up around kind and decent people, and I have come to expect that in my best relationships. This looks like concern for others, a baseline of politeness, and reciprocity (giving and not just taking). Without kindness and respect, most other of the traits I have listed here become destructive: ambition without kindness can become predation, and intellect without respect is arrogance. Fortunately, I have found friends who consistently show kindness through hospitality, service, and moral support. They don’t join in with most crass, abusive, and negative talk. They understand that kindness and respect for others are

in their own best interest, and they live these behaviors consistently.

4. Authenticity/Integrity

Telling the truth has made my life immeasurably better, and being surrounded by authentic and truthful people has helped to encourage me in that. People with integrity (undivided personalities, basically) and authenticity (courageous self-revealing) make extraordinary friends. I can trust them to be what they say they are, and (with some exceptions) to do what they say they will do. I can share my weaknesses with them, and they can share their weaknesses with me, but we can both be stronger for not hiding from each other.

This, plus intellect/curiosity, also tends to make conversations with friends much more engaging and meaningful. There isn't much hot air in these people.

5. Ambition/Competence

My best friends have a strong desire for self-improvement, and they can put in the work to get it done. Their ambition isn't necessarily just about climbing some career ladder. It's a general disposition of positivity and growth in multiple areas of life, including professional work but also including self-knowledge, character, relationships, personal health, and education.

Competence is irresistible to me. If someone is either excellent at what they do or trying to be excellent, I already have a strong baseline of admiration for them. It's not too hard to turn that into friendship and alliance. I feel incredibly lucky to know so many competent and ambitious people from my time in Praxis and my work with BitPay.