

Max Paradox

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

A tongue-in-cheek guide series ;)

Our Friendship Only Works When I Text First

How to Recognize a One-Sided Friendship,
Talk About Mutual Effort, and Decide
Who Deserves Your Time



We've got a problem. But relax.
It can be solved - and we'll even have something to laugh about.

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INTRO

If you stop texting first, does the friendship still exist?

There is a very simple experiment that most of us would rather not run.

It requires no lab equipment, no research grant, no consent form, and no person in a white coat pretending not to judge your life choices.

All you need is your phone, a few people in your contacts, and enough patience to do one thing.

Stop texting first.

You do not announce it.

You do not block anyone.

You do not post a mysterious quote about "real people revealing themselves."

You do not upload a black-and-white selfie with the caption "new chapter."

You do not suddenly become emotionally unavailable and call it growth.

You simply stop initiating for a while.

And then something interesting happens.

It gets very quiet.

The person you used to message several times a week somehow does not ask how you are doing.

The friend who was always happy to meet for coffee when you suggested the place, found the date, booked the table, sent the reminder, and practically arranged airport transfers does not suddenly come up with a plan of their own.

The person whose ninety-minute voice notes you have listened to through breakups, promotions, family arguments, rent problems, neighbor drama, and one very detailed conflict with someone from accounting does not appear to notice that you have been unusually absent.

You open your messages.

Your last text.

You scroll up.

Also yours.

A little higher.

Yours again.

At some point, you begin to suspect that you are not actually a participant in the friendship.

You are its operations department.

You initiate.

You check in.

You remember.

You ask how the interview went.

You suggest dinner.

You revive the conversation after silence.

You send the birthday message.

You follow up after the bad week.

You make sure the plans still exist.

You are patient when the other person is busy, tired, stressed, dating someone new, moving apartments, changing jobs, having a complicated month, or "just going through a lot right now."

The difficult part is that "right now" can last six years.

And for six years, you can keep telling yourself that everyone is busy.

Which, of course, is true.

This book is not going to tell you that anyone who takes three days to reply is a toxic emotional parasite who must be removed from your life by sunset.

People genuinely get busy.

They have children, work, health problems, family responsibilities, money worries, bad periods, messy schedules, emotional overload, and phones permanently living at 6 percent battery.

Some good friendships are irregular.

You may not speak for a month and then meet for lunch and feel completely at ease within ten minutes.

Some people are terrible texters but excellent friends.

They may forget to reply to "How are you?" for five days and still show up at 2 a.m. with jumper cables, snacks, and a completely unnecessary flashlight when your car dies.

Mutual effort is not mathematical equality.

You do not need a spreadsheet.

"I initiated fourteen times. He initiated eleven. Friendship balance: minus three. Immediate intervention required."

We are not building a loyalty points system where remembering a birthday earns five credits, helping someone move earns eight, and forgetting your barbecue results in a downgrade from Close Friend Gold to Casual Contact Bronze.

Relationships do not work like airline status.

But they also do not work particularly well when one person is carrying the whole thing on their back.

That is what this book is about.

The difference between a temporary imbalance and a friendship that only functions because you keep supplying the energy.

The difference between someone who loves you but has a different communication style and someone who is perfectly happy to have you around as long as you do all the maintenance.

The difference between being generous and quietly exhausting yourself.

And, eventually, the difference between a friendship that needs one honest conversation and a friendship that has already answered your question through years of behavior.

The most exhausting friendship is not always the dramatic one

Some difficult relationships are easy to identify.

There are fights.

Insults.

Manipulation.

Jealousy.

Boundary violations.

Competition.

You leave dinner and spend the next three hours replaying one sentence someone said over dessert.

Those problems are painful, but at least they are visible.

A much harder friendship to evaluate is one that looks perfectly fine.

Nobody insults you.

Nobody obviously takes advantage of you.

When you text, the other person often replies warmly.

If you suggest meeting, they may happily agree.

If you ask for a small favor, they may even help.

Technically, nothing is wrong.

There is only one small issue.

If you stopped running the relationship, it might stop completely.

It is a little like an old car that drives beautifully, provided someone is permanently behind it pushing.

And that ambiguity is exhausting.

Because you do not have a dramatic reason to leave.

You just have more and more reasons to feel unimportant.

So you begin negotiating with yourself.

"Maybe I'm overreacting."

"At least they replied."

"They've got a lot going on."

"We always have a great time when we meet."

"We've known each other forever."

"They've always been like this."

That last sentence deserves special attention.

"They've always been like this."

Fine.

But if someone has always given you very little, does that automatically mean you must keep pretending that very little is enough?

History does not create a permanent obligation to maintain the same level of closeness.

Twenty years of friendship can mean twenty years of deep connection.

It can also mean twenty years of you doing work you never called work.

"But I know they like me"

They probably do.

This is one of the most important things to understand.

A one-sided friendship does not always mean a fake friendship.

Someone can genuinely like you and still invest very little in the relationship.

They can enjoy your company.

They can be happy when you text.

They can appreciate your invitations.

They can think you are funny, smart, kind, reliable, and one of the better people they know.

And they can still have very little natural drive to maintain the connection themselves.

That does not automatically make them a bad person.

It also does not obligate you to become the full-time maintenance department for the friendship.

We often confuse two things: affection and effort.

Someone may feel warmly toward you but contribute very little.

You, meanwhile, may need relationships in which the other person does not merely respond to your presence but occasionally seeks it out.

That is not excessive.

You do not need to be anyone's number one priority.

You do not need daily 8 a.m. messages.

You do not need a standing contract requiring coffee on the first Thursday of every month.

But it is reasonable to want the occasional sign that your existence has occurred to someone without you sending a reminder.

"I thought of you."

"How did that thing go?"

"Want to meet this weekend?"

"How are you doing?"

Four short sentences.

And yet they can tell you a lot.

The problem begins when you constantly interpret silence in the other person's favor

Human beings hate empty spaces.

If we do not have an explanation, we tend to manufacture one.

A friend does not text.

"They must be busy."

No reply.

"They're probably tired."

No suggestion to meet.

"They're going through a lot."

Another month.

"They probably assume I'm busy too."

Another silence.

"They probably meant to message and forgot."

At some point the explanations become so creative that you are basically writing the other person's internal monologue for them.

Maybe every explanation is true.

Maybe none of them is.

Eventually, the reason becomes less important than the experience.

Whatever is happening inside their head, what does this friendship actually feel like from your side?

Imagine two people.

One says:

"You know I love you. You're really important to me."

The other says very little but messages:

"Hey, you had that interview today. How did it go?"

Which one gives you more actual experience of being remembered?

Intentions matter.

Behavior matters too.

You can have excellent intentions and still be a poor friend to a particular person.

Someone else can genuinely care about you and still create a relationship in which you are constantly hungry for signs of connection.