



## SEPTEMBER 2018

# YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE FRIENDS

Last month I had the good fortune to attend the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) Summit in San Diego, CA. It was a three-day conference featuring lecturers from among the best and brightest in my profession. As a dyed-in-the-wool learner (one of my signature strengths), I never fail to come away from these events renewed, refreshed and refocused. The topics covered were diverse. Whether focusing on mental health, personal finance, the physical workspace, or the reversal of cardiovascular disease, one central theme kept emerging: the importance of friendships to our wellbeing.

In 2010 the Gallup organization, in *Wellbeing, The Five Essential Elements*, identified social wellbeing as one of the five interdependent and modifiable areas of a life well lived. Individuals with thriving social wellbeing report spending at least six hours per day strengthening the relationships that help them succeed professionally, enjoy life and be healthy. Gallup frequently cites the work of social scientists Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler who have devoted their careers to studying the contagion of social networks. They have repeatedly demonstrated that our relationships not only govern our mood, but also our health related behaviors and outcomes. The contagion of everything from happiness to obesity spreads not only to our friends, but to our friends' friends, and beyond to our friends' friends' friends. That is a formidable sphere of influence!

At its core, the sphere of influence begins with the interaction between two people. The recipe for turning a complete stranger into a friend includes:

1. Physical proximity – Think about your best friends. Most of mine have at some time lived or worked very close by.
2. Familiarity – With repeated exposure to someone, we tend to develop a sense of safety and comfort around them.
3. Similarity – The more we have in common with someone, the more we tend to like them.

Add a few personal disclosures and shared struggles and a friendship is born. No wonder we make friends at work – it is the perfect relationship incubator!





# the supplement

FACILITATING VITALITY

Gallup went on to study the different types of friends in *Vital Friends, The People You Can't Afford to Live Without*, by Tom Rath. It defines vital friends as those people who measurably improve your life. Consider the following types of vital friends:

- **Builders** – Friends who motivate you to invest in your development and push you toward the finish line.
- **Champions** – Loyal friends with whom you can share things in confidence. They have your back and sing your praises. Their role is like that of a celebrity's agent or a politician's campaign manager.
- **Collaborators** – Friends with whom you share similar interests such as sports, hobbies, movies or books. You very frequently belong to the same affiliations or organizations.
- **Companions** – Always there for you, the companion bond is virtually unbreakable. They are your first call when something big happens –good or bad.
- **Connectors** – Friends who socialize regularly and introduce you to others. They extend your network dramatically.
- **Energizers** – These are your fun friends who always give you a boost. They see how the small things that they do on a daily basis accumulate and add to your overall happiness.
- **Mind Openers** – Friends who expand your horizons and encourage you to embrace new ideas, opportunities, cultures and people. If you're stuck and need a new perspective, talk to a mind opener.
- **Navigators** – The friends who give you advice and keep you headed in the right direction. You go to them when you need guidance.

If you are interested in finding out the roles that you and your friends play in one another's lives, check out the Vital Friends Web Assessment at <https://gx.gallup.com/vitalfriends.gx/>.

And help us welcome Dutch 2.0 to the BKS Family. He is one of our community's vital friends. He is one of our energizers.



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Director, Wellness  
Engineering

Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20 years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

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