

## WHAT’S GETTING IN THE WAY?

We’ve got our DIY tips under our belt, but are still having trouble with friendships.

It’s possible there are some cultural changes that have affected our ability to make connections. We now have some obstacles in our way that previous generations didn’t have to deal with. In order to move forward in friendships, we need to understand what might be getting in our way.

### *Electronics*

You’re sitting at the park watching your kids play when, suddenly, another mom shows up. You don’t know her and don’t really know what to say to her, so you pull out your phone to check Facebook, pretend to text, or flip through the same emails for the twentieth time.

While it’s handy to have so much information at our fingertips, we tend to resort to it too often. If we’re honest, we sometimes use our electronics to avoid the threat of uncomfortable human contact. We are overattached to technology and underattached to people. *Are your electronics keeping you from meeting people?*

### *Texts and Emails*

Texts and emails are fabulous tools for communicating facts and information. They are not designed to be used for deep conversations or connecting at an intimate level. Sometimes we’re using this wonderful tool for quick, easy communication as a replacement for important face-to-face conversations. It seems we’re becoming experts at written communication and novices at real conversation.

*Are texts and emails replacing valuable conversations?*

*Earbuds*

I left the Hearts at Home office and headed to my car. The office is right in the middle of a neighborhood, so as I walked to the car I noticed

*M*y friend was thirteen years old when she started babysitting me as a newborn. She was the coolest and most fun babysitter I had growing up. We stayed close even after she moved away for college. As I finished high school and college, we continued to stay in touch. We're both married now, have a few kids, recently moved to the same town, and are becoming more like sisters every day! —LINDSEY

our neighbor, her back toward me, was weeding the fence line between her house and our small parking lot. It was one of the first beautiful days of the spring, so I energetically said to her, "Now you've got me inspired. I need to go home and do the same thing!"

No response at all. I was caught off guard by the lack of response and first thought she was ignoring me, but then I thought she just didn't hear me so I started to speak to her again. That's when

I saw the earbuds and the cords connected to the phone in her pocket. She was in her own little world, listening to music or a podcast, but absolutely closed off to any kind of connection. *Are you shutting out the world and then wondering why no one is talking to you?*

*Garage Door Openers*

Sitting on Anne's front porch, we watched her neighbor turn onto their street. We gave a courteous wave as she pulled into the driveway. Magically, and with no need for her to exit the car, her garage door

opened. She pulled the car into the garage and the door closed behind her. No opportunity for connection existed.

Garage door openers are fabulous inventions . . . particularly when it’s cold and snowy. However, they make it easy for us to enter and leave our house without connecting with our neighbors in any way. *Are you making opportunities for casual conversation to happen in your neighborhood?*

### *Pace of Life*

“Tonight one kid has a baseball game, another a swim meet, and my husband is playing basketball in the church league,” said a friend I saw at the grocery store when I asked her to walk that evening. Life is often too busy to fit in some “walking and talking,” or coffee, or a girls night out. The offer is sometimes there but the opportunity is lost because we’ve said yes to too many things.

There are more opportunities than ever for our kids, our spouses, and ourselves to be involved in. Sports, music, theater, church, clubs, social events, and all kinds of activities keep our calendars full. *Is your pace of life crowding out your space for friendships?*

### *Social Media*

While social media has friendship benefits that we just explored, it can also be a barrier to friendship. We can experience a false sense of connection, thinking that we know what’s going on in someone’s life because of what they put out on social media. When in reality, there’s really something else happening behind the scenes that only a face-to-face conversation might be able to tease out.

“Liking” a post isn’t the same as talking about something and sorting through the feelings. Commenting can cause misunderstandings because it may be read differently than you “heard” it in your head as you wrote it. The lack of emotion in the written language makes social media a better place for information exchange than it does for heart-to-heart conversations. *Are you replacing real conversations with online connections?*

### **YOUR MOSAIC TRIBE**

As you’re putting together your mom tribe, don’t discount developing friendships with women who are in different stages of life than you are. My friend Becky, who is about ten years older than I am, reminds me that there have been times she’s been able to help me because she had the freedom a mom with kids still at home wouldn’t have had. We need women who are in our same season of life for sure. However, we need to also be open to relationships with those who are journeying behind us and those who are ahead of us.

We’ve now established some categories that will help us understand different stages of friendship. We’ve got some DIY tips under our belt and we’ve checked to see if we unknowingly have friendship barriers in place. Now we need to understand all the mothering personalities out there and how to avoid some friendship frustrations along the way. We’re all unique, see the world through different eyes, and have our own baggage we carry into friendship. Turn the page and let’s explore the relational dynamics we have to navigate as we build a beautiful mosaic of friendship.