

Researchers explore lifelong friendships

August 21 2007

U.S. researchers said college students wishing to develop lifelong friends need to invest time while still in school in developing such relationships.

"Maintaining quality long-term friendships is difficult today because people move frequently and there are many technological and media distractions," said Purdue University Professor Glenn Sparks, who studied the 19-year friendships of a group of 1983 college graduates.

"The geographic and personal distance between people continues to grow, and there are some harmful effects for those who lack quality relationships," he said. "Friends are essential because they provide emotional stability in a person's life. Making friends is like managing a bank account. You must make investments and it is never too early to start."

Sparks was part of a research team that included Ohio University Assistant Professor Andrew Ledbetter and Wheaton College Professor Emeritus Em Griffin.

The researchers followed the friendships of 32 pairs of same-sex and 13 pairs of male-female best friends from 1983 to 2002. The findings appear in the summer edition of the journal *Personal Relationships*.

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Citation: Researchers explore lifelong friendships (2007, August 21) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-08-explore-lifelong-friendships.html>

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