



269: Friendship Breakups with Laura Tremaine

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 269. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful but distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place for discerning your Next Right Thing. As we continue this short series on friendship, I'm glad to welcome one of my in real life friends who I first met because of the internet. She's the author of one of my top 10 favorite books of 2020, *Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First*, and she's also the host of the *10 Things To Tell You Podcast*. Laura Tremaine is joining me today from her home in Los Angeles where she lives with her husband, Jeff, and their two kids.

I've known of Laura for over a decade as we were both pretty early participants in the blogging world, but now I'm glad to call her an in real life friend, one that I've learned so much from, not the least of which is to set timers while I'm reading and to not be afraid of a bold lip. Laura has written an entire book all about friendship for grownups, and I'm glad to say it's already helped me make some really important mindset shifts in my own relationships. It releases on this very day and it's called *The Life Council: 10 Friends Every Woman Needs*. I'm thrilled to have her join us today to talk about friendships, specifically what we get wrong culturally, what it means to believe the best, and what to do when a friendship ends. Listen in.

Emily:

Laura Tremaine, it's so good to have you on The Next Right Thing.

Laura:

Thank you for having me. I am so excited to talk to you, Emily. I've been looking forward to this for a while.

Emily:

Me too. It's the favorite part of my job when sometimes I get to have friends on the podcast. It's like a reward.

Laura:

Totally, and I just love to chat with you and let other people listen in the way that we would talk to each other anyway.

Emily:

Well, absolutely. Hopefully. Hopefully not? I don't know. How do I feel about that? We'll talk about it later. Oh, goodness. Well, I have to say with the release of the *Life Council*, congratulations, by the way.

Laura:
Thank you.

Emily:

Happy release day. Y'all, we now finally have a useful friendship book for grownups and so, Laura, we thank you for writing it. You are one of my favorite writers. I say that without any hyperbole, is that the word, hyperbole? Exaggeration? Laura's first book, *Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First*, is such a great place to start if you want help reflecting on your life as a whole, specifically as it relates to knowing and telling your own story. And I would say, Laura, tell me if you agree or disagree with this, but I would say what you do in all of your writing and all of your work, it's about connection to ourselves, to our own stories, to one another. From where I sit, that's what it is, but you tell me, fix it if I've got that wrong.

Laura:

No, you've got that exactly right, but I didn't set out for that to be the main theme. That is what I have needed over the years. I originally started my blog a million years ago. Actually, 13 years ago when my first child was a baby. I started the mommy blog because I was lonely, but I wasn't trying to teach people how to build connection. I didn't even know how to build connection. So cut to now, that has become a huge theme in my work, but I think it is that idea of teach what you know or write what you know, that these are books, both of my books are things I wish that I had had to read during my lonely years or during my early 30s during the baby trenches.

All of these things about sharing your stuff and building a Life Council, I wrote the book that I wish I had read. But that was completely born out of need. I'm not a connection expert. I'm not a therapist. I'm not anything like that. It's just I've had to figure this out and I love to write, so now I'm going to share with you what I figured out.

Emily:

I love it. Those are some of my favorite books to read because they're so immediately relatable and we don't need a special dictionary by our side to figure out what you're trying to say because we've all in some ways lived it too. A question for you to start off is, what would you say that we as a culture consistently get wrong about grownup friendship?

Laura:

Well, the biggest thing is that we think that it's a never ending resource. People don't want to focus on friendship, friendships going away or friendships being hard or whatever, because we feel like there's so many people in the world that one could be friends with. If one's not working out, find another one. In our other relationships, that's not the case. Of course, with your spouse, with your kids, with your boss, whoever, you have to work with the situation that you're in. You have to put the work in. You have to really be intentional about things. And we are not spoken to about friendship in that way. Friendship should just be natural. We should all just be good at it. There's a million people to be friends with. It should just be this thing that's around, like water or whatever.

And I think that's where culture really gets it wrong because every woman I've talked to, friendship is not that easy for them. They have had struggles, they have had strife with besties, or they've never had a bestie. All of these different ways that we have pain in our adult friendships, I think it comes from this expectation that it's supposed to be easy, that it's supposed to be effortless, and we're supposed to be naturally good at it, and that it will always be around. And literally none of those things are true.

Emily:

That concept of the unlimited source of human connection that we assume is there, you put that so well. And I can relate to that. When you mentioned we don't think about that with our boss or other

relationships, there's a finite number of bosses that I have or of other people, but you're right, that's such an interesting thing to think about. You mentioned bestie. Is that a word you still use?

Laura:

I mean, I use it tongue-in-cheek. I don't use it for deep, serious contemplation.

Emily:

Or best friend, is that a concept that you still apply to friendships?

Laura:

I do, actually, and I don't think that you have to grow out of that. I do think a best friend looks different than it looks in fourth grade when you have swapped friendship bracelets or whatever. It feels very different in adulthood. A lot of people have, like I do, best friends in different areas of their life. I have a best friend from college. I have my best friend from childhood. I have my best friend in my mom group. Now, in my mom group, for example, which is a local to me group I see multiple times a week at school or whatever, I don't call her my best friend to the exclusion of everyone else in that group. But there is a person in that group that I'm closest to.

Emily:

Right.

Laura:

So when I'm talking just generally, I have best friends from these different parts of my life. I don't want to take the juvenile side of that, that it's a "bestie" like you're ranking friends. Someone wins gold and everyone else is not. But I do think that it is appropriate to acknowledge that some relationships are closer or more of a priority than others. In fact, we get ourselves into trouble when we try to make everything always equal in our friendships and you're trying to give the same amount of time and effort to someone that, actually, it's not reciprocated or it's very draining to you or whatever.

And sometimes we let our besties, we almost take them for granted of like, "Oh, I don't have to put so much effort into that relationship because she's my best friend and she knows it and we've claimed." And you know what happens? That ends up hurting or eroding that relationship because you aren't as effortful with that one as you are with the other. So there is a healthy way to talk about friendships and that you're closer to other people. There's nothing wrong with that, in my opinion.

Emily:

You talk about 10 friends every woman needs, and I know that some listeners will immediately be like, "I don't even know 10 people. How could that be possible?" I know that's probably some, maybe not pushback, that might be a strong concept, but you might have gotten questions about that. So could you tell us more about, what do you mean by the Life Council and how you see it applying to our friendship lives?

Laura:

Okay, well, first of all, I do not want people to be scared by the subtitle of this book. I do think people see 10 Friends Every Woman Needs and you're immediately hit with this feeling of scarcity like, "Oh, I don't have that. I'm not reading this. This is going to make me feel bad about myself. This is going to make me feel lonely. This is going to make me feel shame or something." Let's take that part off the table. I am writing about 10 friends every woman needs over the course of their lifetime. Most of us, unless we're extremely social, extremely extroverted, are not going to have all 10 of these people at the same time. Even if you are extroverted, some of these friendships are very seasonal. You're not going to have a mentor probably over the whole of your life. Maybe you have a mentor in the beginning of your career.

Maybe you become a mentor later to other parents or people in your community.

That's a seasonal person on the Life Council and there are a few of those, because what the Life Council is, it is a way to look at your friends that highlights their strengths and what is good about your relationship. Instead of feeling like, "I don't feel extra close to this person. I can't have heart to hearts with this person. This person is really only a work friend. I never see her outside of work." It's taking all these different relationships in our life, because the key to me is we're looking at existing relationships mostly in our life, and assembling them to see how they speak into your world. In a business sense, when you have a board of directors, that's where the idea comes from, if you have a board of directors, a business will choose, a company will choose someone who's really good at finances and someone who's really creative and someone who's good with customer service or whatever, and you assemble those people on your board of directors to help your company thrive with all these different strengths.

This is the idea of the Life Council. You are looking around and seeing who in your world over time and also right now what they are bringing to the table in relationship and what you are bringing to theirs. I'm hoping that the idea of this Life Council isn't putting people in boxes but giving you freedom to let your strengths shine. If you're like, "I'm never going to be the friend that stays out till 2:00 a.m. with you whooping it up and having [inaudible 00:11:53]. I'm never going to be that," you can have someone else be that. You are the friend that brings lasagna when someone's sick or you are the friend that gives great business advice or is just a work lunch buddy. I don't mean just a work lunch buddy, but that's just your role and that's their role in your life. And if that's a strength, it doesn't have to be any kind of scarcity. That's what the whole concept of the Life Council is.

Emily:

I love everything you're saying mainly because you're putting language to something that, like you said earlier, we somehow have gotten the idea that it's supposed to just come naturally, and sometimes we just have that word friend and we don't define our terms. So, therefore, we either feel like we are lacking, like we don't have enough of something to give, or we don't have good friends because they're not all things to us. And so it's like you're raising the level of intentionality about the way we talk about, think about, and show up as friends. And when I think about, it's another area of our life where we often forget we actually have decisions to make here both in our mindset and in our action. And so that's why this is a Next Right Thing conversation to me because there's a decision making process and mindset that comes into even our friendships. This is something that we can impact and affect change in.

Laura:

Well, and also because pop culture and movies and books and things really are teaching us that friendship looks a certain way, that it is a cradle to grave type of friendship. The best friendships are those that are soul connection, the ones that will walk by your side forever. I hope that we all do have relationships like that in our life, especially when we come across tough times. That's a special and beautiful relationship, but that's not what all friendship looks like. It's not. There's a lot of different ways that friendship can look and so I really just don't want people to feel like if you don't have that deep bestie or if you don't have someone that's helping you through a hard time and you're in a hard time that, that means that you're unlikeable or that you're unlovable or that there aren't people in your life that can help you or that you can help in other ways.

So part of this conversation or the reason that I wanted to talk about it or write about it is because the messages that we're getting from the world about what adult women friendship is supposed to look like is really one note. I was told a bunch of different times in my life that, "Oh, this is where you'll find friends." When you're in your 20s and you're going out and being fun, when you become a new mom, "Oh, it'll be mom friends." I put all of my expectations in those baskets. I was like, "Okay, I have a baby now. Here come the friends." That did not happen for me. And I did all the right things. I went to mommy and me

classes. I met up with my stroller at the park. I was trying so hard because everyone had told me that when I became a parent, that is when your community will arrive. And it did not for me and I was just as lonely, if not lonelier, than before.

And it wasn't because I didn't know people. I knew people, but I wasn't feeling connected and I wasn't, as the book writes about, looking around at those women that were at the park with me and being like, "You know what we are? Seasonal friends. We are at the park friends and that's all we are. I'm never going to talk to any of y'all again." But we're getting each other through this season. It's companionship and companionship is a huge benefit and value to my life.

Emily:

Absolutely, and it matters and it still counts even if it doesn't look the way you know. You are in a season with the age of your kids where you're doing a lot of volleyball traveling, and I'm watching on Instagram, you have some volleyball mom friends. And who's to say they aren't also other friends? They might sit in several seats on your Life Council, I realize. But, for me, two of my three kids have graduated high school, so they're off at college, and so I have one left who's not super into school stuff. He just goes to school and comes home and does other things at home but not sports-y things, and so I've now realized, it's taken me six months of my twins being off at college for me to realize, "Oh, my season of having mom friends where our kids are friends, that season has passed for me."

And I don't even know if I was really that great at it when I had that season, but now, oh well, too late. And I've had to have a moment of realizing like, "Oh, number one, that was my my chance to have mom friends." But then it helped me look back and think, it was a few years ago, but here's what that was and here's what that friendship was, and being able to have a name and a category for it now rather than thinking, "Well, I'm a big fat failure because I don't keep in touch with those people anymore." But recognizing, no, that was a season and it was a good season, but now it's passed.

Laura:

Right. And it was someone that you could sit with in the bleachers.

Emily:

Right.

Laura:

And even if that's all it was, again, that goes back to companionship, that takes a few things off the table. When you have a mom friend or a parent friend who's always in the bleachers at the same time you are, that guarantees that you're going to see them once a week or whatever it is. You haven't had to come up with a coffee date. You haven't had to reach out and be like, "Can we get together?" That particular friend, whether the relationship is deep or simply companionship, is always in the bleachers, and so are you. So that's another piece of this that I'm talking about when we're looking at the landscape of who is already in our lives, we make these snap judgements of like, "Well, she doesn't really seem like my type. Oh, she is too introverted for me, too extroverted for me." Whatever it is, we make these judgements.

If there are people in your life that you see already on a regular basis for whatever your life circumstances are, a kid activity is a good example, those are the people that are your daily duty friends. And maybe that's all they are and now when you're an empty-nester, when your kids go off to college, you're like, "Well, that part is over." But that's okay too. Wasn't it fun that you were there and you got to go to tournaments together and you had someone to grab a meal with during that weekend?

Emily:

That's right.

Laura:
That is still a fulfilling part of our life. It can be.

Emily:
Absolutely.

Laura:
It can fill our cup in a totally different way. We can't discount those relationships just because they're not deep and seasonal.

Emily:
One of the general friendship principles that you elevate is the philosophy of believing the best about one another or assuming positive intentions, and my friendships personally have gotten better when I started to consciously embrace this philosophy. And so I wonder if you could say more words about how, as you say, "believing the best in someone takes less energy than assuming the worst".

Laura:
This is one of my core friendship philosophies, but it might be something you have to really work at. I mean, I did because it is maybe natural for our brain to go to the worst place. They didn't text us back because they actually secretly hate us or I didn't get invited to the party because everyone is hanging out without me all the time and, finally, it's been proven or whatever. We can jump to all of these conclusions that come from our own insecurities, that come from our own baggage and times that we have been hurt in the past that we bring forward, all of these different things that bring our worst fears to the surface, that we are unlikeable or that we are unworthy of deep friendship, or any of those things. I have to talk myself into believing the best of my friends, even when it's not an accidental thing like they didn't text you back or something, that happens to everyone.

Even when they actually said a hurtful thing, it came out of their mouth, I heard it, it hurt my feelings, even under that circumstance, I have to remind myself that they didn't mean to hurt me in that way. They didn't realize how much it was going to hurt. I have to believe the best of their intentions because I want them to believe the best of mine. Because I also do not text people back. I also sometimes accidentally say something that hurts people's feelings. I don't ever mean it, I did not set out to hurt anyone, but it happens because this is what happens in relationship. And so when it's coming the other direction, when someone has hurt me in some way accidentally or very much directly, I have to believe the best of them, of their intention, of where their heart is. It does not mean that you can't ask for an apology or address it or do any of those things.

But if you have to have that conversation, if it's not something that you can just believe the best and move forward with, if you have to have a conversation, you have to come to that conversation believing the best about them instead of coming to the conversation in an accusatory, I know that you secretly were trying to embarrass me in front of everyone, or something like that. That's not going to be a healthy, reparative friendship conversation. That is going to be a tension-filled conversation. If you come to a conversation like that believing the best in them, then you can have a true offered apology, hopefully, and forgiveness and move forward. If you don't believe the best in friends and you're constantly second guessing or questioning or believing the worst, it builds up and builds up and builds up, and then it's going to end up becoming some drama that you don't want or that is built on a bunch of assumptions that are not correct. You just have to start with believing the best. If you have a friendship where you just cannot get yourself to believe the best, you are stuck on the idea that actually there is something bad about this, then that whole friendship deserves an examination, honestly.

Emily:
I think we all probably can identify in ourselves, even in our bodies when we come to the fork in the road

of, am I going to believe the best or am I going to assume the worst, there are times when it's such a relief when I am wise enough in the moment to be like, "I'm just going to assume the best and maybe we have to have a conversation or maybe not." But the work it takes to carry the burden of believing the worst or feeling like the worst, that takes a lot of energy that most days I really don't have extra of. So I love the way you frame that, that believing the best in someone takes less energy than assuming the worst, because when I assume the worst, news stories keep coming and it takes a lot of emotional energy to feed them and to keep them going, sometimes it seems too good to be true to assume the best, but it's always a relief for me.

And your point is a great one, even if I'm wrong, because if I'm wrong, it will come to light and then the conversation will happen with so much more clarity because it's like, "Oh, I believed the best and still this turned out terribly, so this is definitely something that needs some examination." Which brings me, Laura Tremaine, to my next question, which is, let's say you do all the work, you assume the best, and still a friendship either comes to an end or you have to have a conversation that comes to an end, or it came to an end for reasons that you have no idea and you have talked with your therapist and your spiritual director to try to figure out what happened and all you can hear back from them is, sometimes there is no story. Sometimes things just are. So there are all these reasons or unreasons why this might happen, but share with us your wisdom about what do we do when a friendship ends?

Laura:
Well, it sounds like maybe you have some experience.

Emily:
I don't know. I'm just saying maybe those are some things that could be true for a person.

Laura:
Okay, well, all jokes aside, when we talk about friendship breakups or friendships ending, I always want to tell people, I've just been really saying this for years now, "It is devastating and you are super allowed to grieve it." In fact, you should grieve a relationship ending. Back to the culture thing, we are not taught that. If you go through a romantic breakup and you stay in bed for weeks, you are truly depressed, it really spills over into all of your life because that's what happens with romantic breakups, our culture gives all kinds of space for that. "Of course. Oh my word, of course you're grieving that." When a friendship breakup happens, which happens to so many more people than talk about it openly, everyone's like, "Get over it. What's the deal?"

Emily:
Endless supply. Look at all the other people you could be friends with.

Laura:
"Buck up," kind of thing. And so I always want to give a ton of permission that, if you've gone through a friendship breakup and it really wrecked you, that you're not the only one. I think that, that is a lot more common than people talk about. They don't want to talk about how wrecked they are because I think we think it makes us look like immature or weak or something.

Emily:
Childish.

Laura:
Yeah, that there's a lot of drama around it, that we're not just marching forward, that we're not just being the better person. All these different ways that it makes us feel bad for really feeling bad, this friendship is over it, it can truly be as devastating. In fact, many women I've talked to around this book, their friendship breakups, including one that I went through, it was more devastating and heartbreaking than most of our romantic breakups. Because in a romantic relationship there is always a little bit of a possibility that it may

end. In a friendship, we just don't really think that. Your friends, you don't think about an end or not. And so when it comes, if it comes, it really can throw you for a whole loop. And it's really hard. There's a few things about friendship breakups that I also want to say.

I think that we're most used to, and probably this is the best way if all parties appear to be in agreement, to have a friendship fade. It just naturally fades. Now, maybe that's circumstantial. Like you said, your kids have gone to school, so some of those friendships when they were younger are going to fade. Someone moves. Someone gets an ultra busy job that just really takes up a lot of their time. A friendship fade is sometimes just a relief to be like, "Okay, well, we're all just in new seasons and it's okay. We're all in agreement." When the relationship has something that's different, so there's actually been a rupture, there's been a transgression, there's been a thing that requires a conversation and it's going to be the declared end to a relationship, Brene Brown teaches us that clear is kind, unclear is unkind.

And that is hard because we would all just rather be like, "Oh, I need to take a break or something." We try to just dance around it and cushion it, and I'm not saying you should ever be unkind in your words about it, but the hardest friendship breakup I've ever gone through, she was very direct with me and was basically like, "We are not friends anymore." Now, in the moment, that was awful. I mean, awful, awful, awful. In the bigger picture, it was so much better for me to not have the ambiguity, to not have months of being like, "Is she not texting me back because we're in a fight?" To go through that whole, "I don't know. Are we friends? Are we not friends? Are we friends? Are we not friends?" She called it. She was like, "I'm going to go ahead and declare this over." Again, awful in the moment, but at least I was able to start to grieve. I was starting to move forward. It was clear the decision had been made.

Emily:

I feel like that's really rare that you got that.

Laura:

Well, I did. And just to be clear, I did not want that.

Emily:

Right. You didn't want it, but if it was going to end, because in my experience and even just people I've talked with, it seems like the fade is more often what happens. Sometimes for a seasonal way, a natural season, but sometimes it's maybe there was a little bit of a rupture, but you didn't think it was that big of a deal, but the other person evidently did because they don't come around anymore or they got really short with you, and it faded but a really weird way that didn't. Or there wasn't clarity and then you wonder, "Am I supposed to be bringing the clarity? But nothing changed on my end." I think sometimes when you're the one who's the receiver of the, "Oh, something's changed here, but I don't know what it is", it's hard to know what to do with that. So maybe at least you did get the clarity though you weren't asking for it.

Laura:

Well, I did, and you're right, I think that is a rare example. But I am bringing it up because I think that maybe sometimes it is kind. It is helpful to have a definitive thing. But two things about what you're describing, the more common friendship fade or someone ghosting you or someone is fading out and the other person is confused, two things about that, that I want to say that I think are really important. One is, if you suspect that something's wrong, it probably is. Now, this doesn't mean that our anxieties don't lie to us, that our insecurities make us feel that things are a bigger deal than they are, but I am a huge believer in trusting your instinct, listening to your spirit, and if something is wrong, it probably is. And then the second part is, there's a million kinds of conversations you can have between ignoring it completely and having a friendship breakup.

There's so many other ways to just say, "Hey, are we okay? I've noticed that you aren't responding much."

I've noticed that you haven't accepted my invitations to get out. Is there something going on or are you just busy?" Again, we're believing the best, we are giving them the complete benefit of the doubt, but opening the door casually. It doesn't have to be a sit down like, "We need to have a talk." You can casually just ping someone and this takes practice, I know, and I've had to practice this, [inaudible 00:31:36], if I had to practice this, to casually ping someone on text, on voice message, Voxer is an app I use a lot, Marco Polo, whatever you use, to just be like, "Hey, I'm just checking in. It feels like there's some distance between us and I just want to say I miss you." Or, "I just want to say, hey, if this is about that thing a few months ago, it's been on my mind too and I wonder if we could just clear the air."

You can do that kind of conversation a lot more casually. It doesn't mean casually like it doesn't have a weight to it, it doesn't mean anything, but casually meaning it's not ominous, an ominous talk that you're going to sit down to. You can just clear the air and say, "Are we okay?" It also gives the other person, if you suspect it's the other person that's holding the grievance, the chance to say, "Actually, it really hurt my feelings what happened a couple of months ago." And they might not come to you directly. It's really hard to directly come to someone and say, "I just want you to know this hurt my feelings." If you can open that door a little bit to, why is there distance between us, and let them respond, that might be a better way to go about it. Otherwise, it will just stay under the rug or you'll just get further and further apart.

The third part, which I said two, but now I'm going to say three, the third part is, if you're noticing distance with friends or you're not sure if you're okay or you're not sure if she's mad or whatever, is to ask yourself how you feel about it. Because sometimes we are so nervous that someone's mad at us or is ghosting us or whatever, that we literally do not stop to ask ourselves how we feel about it. It's just our insecurities or our anxieties or our loneliness talking as opposed to being like, "Is this friendship fading? Is that for the best?"

Emily:
Right.

Laura:
"Do I need to address it? Am I only addressing it because it's bugging me or am I addressing it because I want to heal? Or maybe I don't need to address it because maybe this is the fork in the road that we needed." So often, myself included, we forget to ask ourselves how we feel. We are only focused on how it looks to others, if we're liked, if we're whatever, and when you ask yourself that of maybe this is a chance to let this friendship change or to have a conversation that's been building instead of trying to really appease them or make sure the other person is okay, which we want to do in relationship also, but also just checking in with ourselves on how we feel.

Emily:
What would you say, Laura, along that same line, or would you say anything different to the person who, maybe the friend doesn't see anything wrong but you as the one are beginning to see I think this friendship has run its course or I'm moving away from this space that this other person is in, whatever the case might be, that you are the one who recognizes, oh, I think it's time? Do you have any words for that person who's beginning to discern that maybe I need to break up with my friend?

Laura:
Well, first of all, listen to yourself. If you are feeling that, don't just push it away and be like, "Oh, shoot, I can't break up with her. I have to see her every Friday at the football game or whatever." Don't try to talk yourself out of your feelings. Even though circumstances like that do matter, whatever your community looks like in this relationship, but listen to yourself and I know I talked about the clear is kind and unclear is unkind, in my opinion, those type of friendship breakups where you have to be that direct are when there has been an actual rupture, there has been an actual transgression, someone has done something to hurt you and you cannot repair it. Or you have started to have belief systems or actions that are very

misaligned with one another and you just feel like you cannot be in a relationship with someone that is on such a wildly different path than you are, that's when the clear is kind, unclear is unkind kind of friendship breakup comes in.

If you are just having what we all have occasionally, which is just, "Yeah, I just don't feel great about myself after spending time with that person," or, "I have a lot on my plate," or, "I just don't know that this friendship is really going anywhere, it's not feeding me, I'm definitely not feeding her that," that kind of thing, this is when I think a friendship fade can be healthy, can be done in a thoughtful, healthy way that isn't drama filled and that isn't like, "We just aren't on the same page." I don't think you have to make it like you're calling them out. You don't have to make it like you are superior in every way to them because for whatever reason you might be feeling different from them.

I mean, I guess there's not a set answer here to you except for listen to yourself. Friendship fades are healthy. They just are. When you're the one being faded out, and I have been, you have been, we've all been the one that's been faded out, and that sucks. It sucks to be ghosted. It sucks to be like, "I'm being phased out of this."

Emily:
Right. I know what's happening here.

Laura:
But let's take a step back and be like, you have no control of someone who is trying to phase you out. It's like chasing the boy that doesn't like you anymore, or whatever. You're not going to convince him to like you. You're not going to be, "Look how pretty I am," or whatever.

Emily:
They're just not that into you.

Laura:
They're just not that into you. That's a friendship concept also. I'm not saying I'm objective about this all the time, but if we can be objective and be like, "All right, well, this has run its course, everybody.

Emily:
Well, that's a word. I feel like something you just said probably should be put on a T-shirt that we all need to wear, one of those phrases, probably the thing about the thing that's healthy. Tell me, what have you come to understand about friendship after writing this book that you maybe didn't know or understand in the same way before?

Laura:
So I learned this first in myself and in my own relationships, and then I brought it to the book and throughout the process of writing the book and now talking about the book. And that is something I did not want to be true, but friendship is work. It can be a chore. It is not all margaritas and coffee dates and shopping and fun times. Nor is it really helping you through a really difficult time. I feel like we see those two extremes all the time, but the dailiness of friendship is work and I had to start putting it on my to-do list. I still use a notebook for my to-do list. I have work tasks I need to do, I have personal tasks I need to do for my family life, and then I have a column now for relationship because I want to be naturally good at remembering that you had a scary doctor's appointment or naturally good at remembering your birthday or what your favorite type of flowers are, or whatever. I want to remember those things. I will not remember those things.

I have to put them on my calendar and on my to-do list when my friends have things that I want to check in with them about or I want to just say, "Hi. I miss you." I just have a running list. If I haven't talked to

somebody in weeks, I'll just be like, "Hey", check in with whoever. Because if I don't, months will go by. And I don't love that. I don't like it being a to-do because I've had my own friendship struggles. I start this book off with a very intense friendship struggle that I had during the pandemic. I start the book off there because I want everyone to know that we've all had stuff. In my own life. This friendship is a to-do part. We don't need more to-dos. I hate framing it out as giving it to you as a chore, but relationships, all relationships take a certain amount of work and a lot of us are busy and we are going to forget things and it's going to hurt someone's feelings, and you're going to have to have more of these conversations like we're talking about.

I had to fix it for myself where I didn't feel like I was constantly running behind and disappointing people because I was just trying to keep my friendship stuff in my head. But you can't do that. I can't keep all my work tasks in my head. I have to write them down. The same became true for me in relationship. I had to write stuff down. I had to remember to text Bree back. I had to remember to Vox Kendra because otherwise it'll get three weeks down the road and how embarrassing. They asked me a question and I didn't respond. I mean, embarrassing isn't really the word. It's irresponsible to that relationship. I care about these people. I want to show them that, and, for me, this required it being a to-do. And I don't think that people talk about that part of friendship either. We talk about the super fun part, we talk about helping each other through crises, but what about just the daily work of friendship? It's like it's a chore, you guys. Sorry.

Emily:

It's real hard work, is what she's here to tell us. Well, speaking of the daily, final question I have for you is the question I ask every guest on the podcast, and that is, before you read us out, because I want you to read us out, but before you do that, Laura, what is your Next Right Thing?

Laura:

Okay, well, you're asking this at the middle of a book launch, so I feel like I have all the things. I have all the Next Right Things, Emily.

Emily:

One thing at a time, baby. One thing at a time.

Laura:

I know. You have taught me so much on this show, in your books. In our real friendship, you have taught me so much about this very concept of The Next Right Thing, and I hope that this isn't a cop out answer, but The Next Right Thing for me is rest. For the last three months, I relaunched my podcast. I've been launching this book. My kid is in club sports. My husband's making a new movie right now, so there's a lot of solo parenting happening. I have been running a race at a pace that is incompatible with life and I have already started building in time to not live like that. I don't want to live like that. And these are good things. Writing books are great. My husband having a new project is great. My kids doing sports, it's all great. These are full happy things on my plate and yet it makes me feel like a fractured, un-whole person.

When I don't get enough rest, when I have too many things on my to-do list, including my friendships, that is when I am angry at people. That's when I snap at people. That's when I get weepy. That's when my anxiety ticks up a lot. Some of this stuff is unavoidable. I want to launch this book well. My family life, those are things that are unavoidable. But the things I can control are rest and, for me, I have intentionally built in some time after I get this book into the world. And that is my Next Right Thing.

Emily:

May it be so for you. May it be so. Final thing, I would love it if you would read for us to close out our time.

Laura:

My relationship blunders over the last few years made me take a step back and decide what matters about my friendships and what type of friend I wanted to be. It also required that I honestly think about how different people fit into my life, schedule, and heart, which felt a bit awkward. I turned to the Life Council Framework as a way to classify the different types of women who have shaped me and to see my relationships from a place of gratitude for what they are without trying to fit every female friendship into the mold of what culture tells me friendship should look like. When I began to understand the roles of certain friends, including the role I play in their lives as well, I found acceptance for these different flavors of friendships in my past, present, and future. It let me let go of some disappointments and sadness and gave me real hope for the friendships of my future.

After my friendship reckoning of 2020, I vowed to put effort into and attention towards these relationships that are continually teaching me how I want to walk in the world. My friends are among the greatest joys of my life. I don't take them for granted because I've been through the lonely years. I don't live in the naivete that all friendships last forever because I've been through loss. I do carry the responsibility that my friendships deserve because I now understand that it's often more work than we acknowledge. Long before I gave any of them a title on my Life Council, I was made better by having these women in my life.

Emily:
Amen.

Thanks for listening to episode 269 of *The Next Right Thing*. I hope this simple practice of considering your own life council can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow, because while it's true this is a podcast about making decisions, the bigger truth is our daily decisions are making our lives. You can learn more about Laura, her books, and her podcast at lauratremaine.com. That's Laura T-R-E-M-A-I-N-E.com. And you can find her brand new book, *The Life Council*, wherever books are sold. You can also find Laura on Instagram at [laura.tremaine](https://www.instagram.com/laura.tremaine). As always, you can find me on Instagram at Emily P. Freeman or online at emilypfreeman.com, where you can also read or download a transcript of this and every episode of *The Next Right Thing*. Shout out to the team at Unmutable who edits our sound each week and to my content manager, Ashley Sherlock, who ensures we have show notes and images and links all in the right place.

In closing, here's another word about friendship from Laura's book, *The Life Council*. It's advice she would give to her younger self. "Pay attention to who you surround yourself with. Attitude, energy, and kindness matters. Your friends will be one of the biggest influences of your entire life, so make sure you've chosen well. Be the type of friend to others that you've always wanted for yourself. Learn when to fight for a friendship and when to let go with love." Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.