



Why Having Mom Friends is So Important

By Pamela Brill | February 12th, 2020



When you can't get your 1-year-old to sleep through the night, she's the one you can text at 2 a.m. When your toddler bursts into tears (again) at preschool drop-off, hers is the number you dial just as you feel like bawling yourself. When your middle schooler seems to cozy up to her phone more than she does to you, she's the pal that commiserates right along with you.

You can't imagine going through motherhood without your female friends. From celebrating milestone moments, to sharing the frustrations that come with the changing years, mom friends are invaluable relationships that can stand the test of time through all phases of parenthood. In honor of Galentine's Day, expert share their thoughts on why investing time and energy in fostering these friendships is essential to our well-being.

It Takes a Village

Once you become a mom, the instinct to connect with other moms kicks in almost as soon as you are home from the hospital. “As mammals, we are social creatures, and our natural environment is to live in an extended family, tribe or village,” says Julie Wright, a marriage and family therapist and owner of The Wright Mommy and Me (Wrightmommy.com). She notes how modern society dictates living as individual family units, which goes against our instincts. “This has created both strong and painful feelings of isolation, along with an increased belief that ‘I must be doing something wrong; it couldn’t be this hard!’”

To counteract the negativity associated with trying to master new motherhood alone, mom-based connections offer much-needed support and camaraderie. “Our goal in our groups...is to create what we call a ‘virtual village,’” says Wright. “Once a group begins to bond in class, get together outside of class and communicate with the group using text and email, everything gets better.” Not only do these groups allow moms to make connections with other likeminded women, but they provide a safe space for sharing daily challenges and simply venting.

Such was the experience of Dr. Ivy Ge, author of *The Art of Good Enough: The Working Mom’s Guilt-Free Guide to Thriving While Being Perfect Imperfect* (<http://bit.ly/artofgoodenough>). As a new mother, she was plagued by feelings of anxiety and guilt and credits her mom friends for helping her understand her emotions. “Sharing my struggles with friends helped me realize I wasn’t the only one who felt inadequate,” she says. “It was liberating to feel normal and understood as I battled against self-doubt during those early years.”

Finding Your Tribe

Seeking out mom connections can be as easy as checking out mommy and me programs at your local library, place of worship or community center or online through mom meetups. If you can’t find any groups nearby, Wright suggests starting your own, but cautions that it will require effort to organize consistent get-togethers. “The gatherings should be simple: meet in the park, go for a walk or go for coffee,” she recommends. “In the early months, you don’t want to have to clean your home or cook to build these wonderful connections.”

Ge found her mom friends through a variety of outlets, including the gym, at talks and workshops and through chance encounters. “Local groups are the easiest to start and maintain friendships,” she says. “One thing I found useful for making new friends is being friendly and helpful.”

Through the Years

Once babies turn into toddlers and then begin school—not to mention the possible addition of a new sibling and/or the end of maternity leave—moms’ schedules shift dramatically. Suddenly, morning walks conflict with pickups and naptime, making it more challenging to find time for regular meetups. “It takes a level of effort and routine to maintain these friendships as the kids get older,” admits Wright. Finding time to enjoy each other’s company during “off hours” could mean a moms’ night out or combined family get-togethers.

For Ge and her family, socializing with her friends' families once or twice a year allows them to become more acquainted with her inner circle. "This way, the entire family will be supportive when I meet up with friends," she notes. (Ge and friends also exchange annual Christmas photo cards to keep up to date on family occurrences.)

Taking time to cultivate mom friendships over the years isn't always easy, but the long-term benefits outweigh the effort. "Whenever I face obstacles, I always think about what my friends would do and try to be as strong or resourceful as them," says Ge. "They'll continue to be an asset in my life as I go through different stages."

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About the Author: Pamela Brill



Pamela Brill, a lifestyle journalist and mother of two, lives on Long Island with her family. When she's not busy scouting out the latest trends or spending time with her girls, she can usually be found with her head buried in the latest bestseller. Follow Pam on Twitter @tweetingwalnut.

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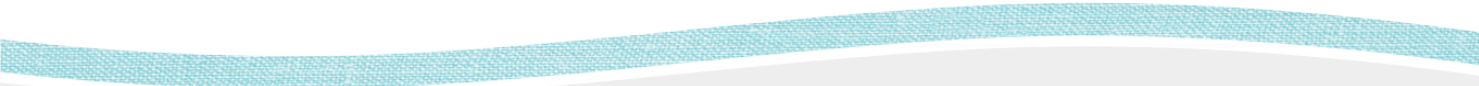
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