

Loss of a Friend: Interview Questions

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Breakup with a friend

Part 1

Tell me the story of how you became friends.

When and where did you meet?

What drew you together?

Was this friend similar to or different from other friends you had at the time?

How so?

Were you part of a larger friend group that you shared?

When your friendship ended, did that group change or stay the same?

Could you share a favorite memory of this friend?

What about an ordinary memory - like what you would do on a typical day together?

Do you think your friend knew you well, and vice versa?

What makes you say yes or no?

What are some things you had in common?

What are some ways that you were different from one another?

Are there qualities or things about you that came out especially around this friend?

Were there things your friend relied on you for? These could be emotional or practical.

Were there things you relied on them for?

Who do you rely on for those things now?

Did you ever live with this friend?

When? For how long? What was that like?

Did you face challenges or conflicts in your friendship prior to the breakup? How did you overcome them together?

Return to later: What made the breakup different from these earlier challenges?

Are there places or things that continue to remind you of this friend?

Part 2

Tell me the story of how you stopped being friends.

When did things start to change between you?

Was there a moment that you knew the friendship was over?

What do you remember about the last conversation you had?

Did you tell anyone else about the breakup when it happened? How did they respond?

If your friend were telling me this story, what do you think they might say about why your friendship ended?

Is this your educated guess, or is it based on something your friend said or did?

Did the breakup affect your social life? Your work life? Any other aspects of your life?

Were there specific things or people that helped you through this?

Were there specific things or people that made it harder?

Are there things that would have helped you that didn't happen at that time?

E.g., support, resources, or care you wanted but didn't get?

If someone you love lost a friend the way you did, what are some things you might do for them?

Are there things about you that have changed as a result of this experience?

*E.g., how you approach friendship? How you understand yourself and others?
Something else?*

How have your feelings about the breakup evolved as time passes?

Rephrased: if you were telling me this story right after the breakup happened, how would it be different from what you're telling me today?

When people talk about breakups, they usually mean a breakup with a romantic partner. Have you had a romantic breakup? If so, how has this been similar to and different from that for you? For people around you? E.g., people's responses to your romantic v. friend breakup?

Have you seen this person since your friendship ended?

How did that go?

If you could go back in time, is there anything you would change at any point in the story of your friendship?

How do you want to remember this person and your friendship going forward?

Do you think you are at peace with where things stand now?

Background

I need to ask some demographic questions to get a portrait of who is in this study. I'm going to ask first for you, and then for your friend, to the best of your knowledge.

How old are you?

How would you describe your

gender?

sexual orientation?

race?

religion?

What is the highest level of education you've completed?

Are there other identities you hold that are important to you, that you want to mention?

Repeat for friend, to your knowledge.

Did you draw on [religion] as you were processing the loss of your friend?

Did any of these other identities shape your experience of the friendship loss you just described?

Conclusion

Is there a question I didn't ask, but should have?

Is there anything else that came up for you during the interview that you would like to share?

Death of a friend

Part 1

Tell me the story of how you became friends.

When and where did you meet?

What drew you together?

Was this friend similar to or different from other friends you had at the time?

How so?

Were you part of a larger friend group that you shared?

Return to later: When your friend died, did that group change or stay the same?

Could you share a favorite memory of this friend?

What about an ordinary memory - like what you would do on a typical day together?

What are some things you had in common?

What are some ways that you were different from one another?

Are there qualities or things about you that came out especially around this friend?

Were there things your friend relied on you for? Were there things you relied on them for? These could be emotional or practical.

Return to later: Who do you rely on for those things now?

Did you ever live with this friend?

If yes, when? For how long? What was that like?

Did you face challenges or conflicts in the course of your friendship? How did you overcome them together?

Are there places or things that continue to remind you of this friend?

Part 2

I'm going to ask you now about the end of your friend's life. Please take your time and tell as much or as little of the story as you feel ready to share.

How did your friend die?

If prolonged: While your friend was experiencing this, how often did you see each other? What did you do together? Did you talk about what was happening?

If sudden: Was there any part of you that saw this coming?

What were your final days together like? Do you remember the last time you saw or spoke to them?

How did you find out they died? What do you remember about that day?

Do you remember where you were?

What you were doing?

Who was with you?

What you did or said when you found out?

What you did for the rest of the day? Who you reached out to, if anyone?

Was there a memorial, funeral, or some other event to commemorate your friend's life?

Did you attend it?

If yes: Do you remember where you sat? Who you talked to? How you felt during and after the ceremony? Do you think your friend would have liked the event?

Why or why not?

If no: Was it your decision not to attend?

If yes: Can you tell me your thought process around that? Was there someone or something you wanted to avoid?

If no: Who - or what circumstance - made that decision for you?

Did you do anything else to commemorate your friend's life? (This could be something very simple and personal.)

If you were working at the time, did you take time off when your friend died?

If yes: Did you tell your employer or coworkers why you were taking time off?

Were they supportive?

If no: Did you want to take time off? What stopped you?

Did you step away from any other activities or responsibilities? Did any aspects of your daily life change?

Grief is different for every person. What are some ways you have grieved and processed this loss?

Were there specific things or people that helped you through this?

Were there specific things or people that made it harder?

Are there things that would have helped you that didn't happen at that time? E.g., support/resources/care you wanted but didn't get?

If someone you love lost a friend the way you did, what are some things you might do for them?

How do you see this loss shaping who you are today?

How do you want to continue to remember this friend?

If your friend were here, what do you think they might add to the story you've told me?

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Are there other identities you hold that are important to you, that you want to mention?

Repeat for friend, to your knowledge.

Did you draw on [religion] as you were processing the loss of your friend?

Did any of these other identities shape your experience of the friendship loss you just described?

Conclusion

Is there a question I didn't ask, but should have?

Is there anything else that came up for you during the interview that you would like to share?