

The Benefits of Couple Friends (*Part 1*)

by Ann Malmberg

We know it's healthy to have separate friendships after you're married. Spending time with your own friends, away from your partner, helps you maintain a balance of "I" versus "we" and nurture your own identity. That being said, there are some unique benefits to having "couple friends," too. Here are four big ones:

They help you gain insight into your own relationship.

When you spend time with other couples, you inevitably will notice the different dynamics of their relationships – the way they interact, communicate, handle disagreements, speak to and about each other, etc. This tends to make you more aware of how your own relationship operates, which can have a positive effect. For example, you might notice the way John and Tara never interrupt each other when one of them is talking, whereas you tend to jump in if your partner is telling a story inaccurately. You might make a mental note to try to interrupt less, or even call yourself out and apologize next time you catch yourself in the act. Or you might notice your couple friends handling something in a way you wouldn't necessarily choose and realize, "Hey, we're actually pretty good at _____," or "I like the way we handle _____."

They're a source of camaraderie and support.

Whether you're navigating life as newlyweds, trekking through the chaos of having babies and young children, or adjusting to an empty nest, there's something special about having couple friends who are in the same chapter of life as you. Not only are they sort of a tag team support system, but they also just *get it*. They understand your struggles with minimal explanation; they know what's helpful – and what's not. When life feels crazy and unpredictable, they are by your side saying, "We don't know what we're doing either, but we've got your back."

(Look for part two next week!)