

Associations between friendship, sympathy, and prosocial behavior toward friends.



THE GIST: We were interested in learning more about friendship, particularly the different aspects of friendship (like friend connection, companionship, and psychological control or manipulation). We wanted to see how these aspects could influence prosocial behavior—the voluntary acts of service or kindness that people do for each other. We collected information from 467 youth once and then roughly a year later. Overall, findings suggested that manipulating friends discouraged prosocial behavior between friends, while friendly connection helped to encourage prosocial behavior (sympathy even!). One interesting finding was that manipulation can exist even in high-quality friendships, whether at the beginning or later on, and people may hang out with others even though they can probably do better. This nuance of friendship is worth studying in further detail over time.

THE TAKEAWAY: Friendship is valuable and the friends we make can shape us. Friendships are important influences on adolescent sympathy and prosocial behavior towards friends. We can maintain good relationships with people through exchanging service and choosing kindness. People can have companionship, but that's not the same as having good friends. When we have a strong connection with others, we can be motivated to be better people.