

Shit We Don't Talk About Podcast
Episode 70 – Friendship Breakups
Guest: Aimee La Fountain

Hey, welcome to the latest episode of Shit We Don't Talk About, the podcast that takes on topics that need more open and honest discussion, which means some of these topics are triggering. So please take care when listening. And I'll always give you a trigger warning. For instance, here's one: Every episode contains swear words, you've been warned. Make sure to check out the show notes which include an accessibility transcript of the podcast and all of the links for our guests at ShitWeDontTalkAboutPodcast.com

It's Episode 70 and my guest is Aimée La Fountain. We're going to tackle the topic of Friendship Breakups. Strap in here we go

SPEAKERS

Mia Voss, Aimée La Fountain

Mia Voss

Hi, Aimée. How are you?

Aimée La Fountain

I'm great. Thanks. How are you? I am great. I'm really excited to talk with you today.

Mia Voss

You found me because of another interview I did with Brijana Prooker. And you approached me about this really important topic of Friendship Breakups, because you've actually written articles about this. You're a journalist, you've had things to say.

Aimée La Fountain

Yeah. So I wrote the piece, based on my experience with Friendship Breakups that were all long term friendships, at least nine or 10 years, in one case, close to 25 years. And it's one of those things that I feel like there's no script for it. There's no really an established dialogue for it the way there is romantic relationship. Like it's not up to me. There's no technical terminology for it. You know, we don't have friends divorce, per se. And so I just thought that it's a much more common experience than you would think, from society and pop culture. And so I wrote about it and hope that sharing what I've gleaned from my experience, both initiating Friendship Breakups and being on the receiving end that hopefully will help others if they're finding themselves in that situation to navigate it a little bit better.

Mia Voss

It is definitely shit we don't talk about in mainly any of the topics that I broach on that it's not because it doesn't occur, it's just happens so often. But we're not talking about it openly, so that we can address it. And it just jogged my thought process when you said about "friend divorce" because there's so many things, there are other friends that were involved. There are places that you went to there's, you know, conversations, there's even the the piece of confidentiality, because especially like you said, you have

a friendship that was 20 years, and I've had several of them too I really, really have that, that I still grieve and mourn over. But there are things like the confidentiality or things that you've shared with those people like, how do you you don't want to stay in a relationship because you're afraid of that. But yeah, dive deeper on all the other messy little pieces and parts of this.

Aimée La Fountain

Oh, yeah. And it gets complicated, I think, part of how long we stay, in a relationship and a friendship, once we see that their issues can go back a lot to our style, if we're confrontational or not. And I'm guilty of that. I think like romantic relationships, you start to get that inkling that there's trouble. But you never want to end a friendship, especially long term one, too soon. And then the sign sort of builds, you find yourself not enjoying yourself as much as you used to with that person or more issues and needs to have, and you get to start thinking about it. But then like you said, you've got all these issues that pop up that make you hesitant to end it, whether it's mutual friends, or shared history, or how that person might react. And you can hope for the best and you hope that your friends will handle it well, but you never really know. But then it kind of I think gets to a point where we all only have this life to live. And you can't associate with somebody just out of a sense of obligation that'll eat away at you. And so I think a lot of times one way or another you try to handle it the best way you can but things have a way of coming to a head sooner or later I think

Mia Voss

I agree. Well, you brought up the YOLO, that you only live once. so let's go through different scenarios. A lot of the times that hesitation could be that you knew them through family. You went to college with them, you went to high school and and I think there's a lot of different iterations of how it comes up. And it could be one that you outgrew them, that's one. I mean, if you're doing grown up grown folks work, or if you're doing any kind of spiritual work, it's not that they necessarily changed it's that you did.

Aimée La Fountain

Yeah, you're in different places in life. And when you think about it, also I think that's natural as well. It's kind of bonkers to assume that any two people will go through every stage of life at the exact same time and then the exact same way.

Mia Voss

And I do think that the obligation piece can really hold people hostage. So let's definitely clarify that there's there's no perfect way to do this right there's no hard and fast.

Aimée La Fountain

You hope your intention comes across honestly and in the right spirit. And you know one thing I think about this issue a lot as well as you hope that even if two people are in differ or places in life and have a different attitude about the friendship, you hope that the person knows, or trusts that your intentions are good. And unfortunately, that is not always the case. You know, I've had situations and I've heard of other people in this situation as well, where somebody who has known you, like I said, for decades, suddenly believes a certain depiction of you or sees you a certain way that you cannot fathom how they

could see you that way, given how long they've known you. And unfortunately, crazy stuff like that comes up as well.

Mia Voss

It does, and I will post a link to your article from YES and this is such a timeless article. I know this was from 2019, but it doesn't matter. It really doesn't. It's such a timeless piece. I love how it's under the under the "Empathy" section, which I think is really important, too. I think, even since you wrote this, there's there's been a rise in the idea and the concept of Emotional Intelligence. That, we were definitely not raised with and we're like, what does that mean, EQ? Hmm. And so I love that it's becoming more popular because EQ really plays into this topic as well, too, of using your emotional intelligence to not ghost and in the age of friendship ghosting. I would say that some advice that you give is that that's the one thing you don't want to do, or unless it's not safe,

Aimée La Fountain

Yes, that is always the caveat. If God forbid you feel unsafe confronting somebody, or if they've, somebody's become aggressive, as my grandmother used to say, you don't need that. That would be the one caveat, though I think, out of respect, even to what your friendship once was, you should at least try to make an effort to end things smoothly. And one thing, I found myself thinking about this and talking about this a lot recently, as well, is I think there is a value to making an effort to end things gracefully. Even if it's not well received, or, if a discussion doesn't even happen (i've had that). If it doesn't get met, as we would hope there's still a value in making that effort.

Mia Voss

So I would say that goes back to the point you made previously to that, you know, it's hard to fathom that your friend could think that of you. Right. So that that piece. So I would say that the first part to start with is letting go of expectation of outcome.

Aimée La Fountain

You have to. You get to a place where I think I think the best approach to have in mind is to think about what you want to say to this person and why you want this person to now, of course, you can't control how they're going to respond to it.

Mia Voss

I hate that about life, by the way.

Aimée La Fountain

Oh my goodness, yeah.

Mia Voss

I hate about life in general.

Aimée La Fountain

I mean, I don't say this with any pride, it kind of hurts my heart to say it. But I had an issue with one friend, where I had this moment of clarity. And I realized that and we had a guy, her now husband, who kind of got in the middle of things. And long story short, it dawned on me one day that I realized that I tried very hard to make her not feel like she had to choose between me and him. But what I didn't realize was that she wanted to choose. And I think also a result of that is I can try to explain my feelings, my intentions, my hopes for our friendship and where I'm coming from. But I can't control whether or not somebody believes me. And something that's there was kind of about, like you said, very difficult to deal with and to a process is, I can give somebody an exhaustive explanation of a situation but I can't control whether or not they believe something about me that's not true. If somebody chooses to believe something, whether or not there's any truth to it.

Mia Voss

I think an interesting piece to that story. Also, you were mentioning previously, before we started the interview is that the the sign that you knew, too, is that she was calling you specifically when he was not around and that would be a big red flag as well

Aimée La Fountain

Absolutely it's a clear ranking. And the funny thing about ranking is I don't understand why there's this tentative approach between people's partners or spouses and their friends, because I actually believe that those relationships can work in harmony with each other. I know there's this cliché thing that a lot of guys especially say, like, oh, there's my competition with a woman's best friend. And not to mention, there's a whole other discussion of when two people get married, there's a debate over whether or not to call that person their best friends. Because if you've married your best friend, and what does that make your former best friend? Yeah, but I think that that's a great disservice to pit friends and partners against each other. Because they're totally different relationships with totally different intentions. I mean, I like I was saying before, I had a moment with one friend, where, like you said, she only reached out to me when her boyfriend was hanging out with his friends. And sometimes when that works out, timing wise, that's fantastic. But I don't think you can only rely on somebody to be sort of your standby or your partner's understudy. To be, the only time you can see each other. And I said to her one day, you know, I shouldn't be in competition with your boyfriend. We want totally different things out of each other out of you. I just want to hang out with you. I'm not, you know, trying to sleep with you. Yeah, like, I'm just trying to date you. I'm just trying to go to lunch, like, I should not be seen as competition. And I also think, I don't think there's enough a discussion of this, either, to be honest. But I don't think it's healthy for any person to put all of their needs and hopes and expectations into one person, whether that's a friend, or your spouse, or your boss or anything. It just seems to me, phenomenally unrealistic to expect any two people to be everything and on the same page for everything. Like one analogy I like to give sometimes is, I used to say to one of my friends like, Oh, does he want to go get mani/pedi's together and go shopping? So why are you looking to get everything out of somebody who's not the exact same person as you.

Mia Voss

It's so true, it's not sustainable. Because at some point, somebody's going to disappoint you.

Aimée La Fountain

Exactly. And then you're sort of expecting somebody to be almost like a pet to you instead of a partner. And I think that's a shame. Because when you take away that competition, a lot of beauty can happen, you free up things to be better in your romantic relationship, because the first thing you have to channel whatever interests, then whatever you have, and so you can appreciate your time with your partner more better quality. And then vice versa, if you have your partner that you go to, for certain things, and certain things to work out. You can enjoy yourself with your friends more. And then the real beauty as well, which, when it works out is I think there's all sorts of spouses of friends. But a really beautiful scenario that I have with some of my friends that I treasure, is that it's entirely possible for your friend, spouse to become a genuine friend of yours. I mean, and so you think to yourself, why would I want to be in competition with this person, when clearly we have similar tastes in people, and as a partner is one of my good friends. So why are we making this a competition, instead of looking at what else that you and I have in common? You know, it's just silly for me to pit those things against each other instead of looking at it as something that can handle all of your relationships, and hopefully give you a bonus. You know? And that's why I wanted to have this conversation, a conversation, because I think what you're saying, it makes a lot of sense. But people don't think of it in that way. And I'm hoping they hear this and find some freedom in switching their mindset, because I think a lot of it is very subtle, as well, too. Because society does kind of say that story. I love what you said about the best friend's piece. I've always loved the phrase of two things can be true at once. And I think that is the healthy piece - that your best friend with this relationship. But then you have this other person one. Yeah, you're not sleeping with him. I don't think! I mean, that's ok if you are too , but you know, have that conversation! Be Honest!

Yeah, which is fine, too.

Mia Voss

Right. Right. And I'm not judging, just make sure everybody knows about it.

Aimée La Fountain

Exactly. I am not disqualifying polyamorous or other kind of relationships.

Mia Voss

Exactly. But then that's also a piece if we're gonna if we'll throw that in there for a second. That is the honesty as well too, as everybody knows what they're they're dealing with. I think adding this showing this freedom to people because we we do follow a lot of pretense in societal norms that we don't even realize and I thought about this quick funny story. It was at a wedding this summer and I haven't been wanting one in years and I was I was calling myself the biddy bridesmaid because everybody was about 10 to 15 years younger than me. I loved the moniker of that of myself.

Aimée La Fountain

I get that because I refer to myself as a retired bridesmaid. So don't get me started, that's a whole other podcast.

Mia Voss

I love that again, stay tuned for that. So it was interesting to observe this now, in my in my 50s. And this wonderful relationship that I've been around for from the start because I've been friends with her since before she's been with him.

Aimée La Fountain

You came first, as I like to joke with one of my friends.

Mia Voss

I was here first. first dibs, right? So I got an opportunity to give a toast. I wasn't the the maid of honor. But I did. We did jokingly refer to when she first started dating him. and I didn't mention this specifically, but she had come from a rough relationship. And so when she started dating him, I just kind of did the quietly pull the side of like, you break your heart and I'll beat your ass. And Scott has now seven years later, he has risen to the task. And now you know, I have always adored him too, but said that in a way of letting them know the importance of their friendship, and then how he took it to? And I think that's a sign as well of how other people respond to the different relationships? Are your old friends seeming like they are threatened by the boy? Yeah, is the boyfriend I think these are these are red and green flags that you can look for in relationships and friendships of "hey, you know, how was that other person reacting to them"? And do you feel like you're in the middle and you're doing a dance?

Aimée La Fountain

Oh, absolutely. I mean, I think there's a lot of beauty there. Like you said, it shows respect that you have for your friend looking out for her, and that He has for you and your friends. I had a great moment like that. years ago with my friend Monet. There was a guy I thought I clicked with and we were chatting all night. And then he just absolutely ghosted the next day. He just kind of said he wasn't looking to date anybody and then disappeared. And my friend ran into him a few weeks later. And she was like, Hey, how you doing? What happened with my friend Aimee, I noticed you disappeared. And completely called him out for it. And I will always love her for that. And I have had a couple of moments where even to other friends I have backed up some of my friends when I think that the other one didn't treat them right. But I think to be honest, I think it's not even ever as simple as the competition too because I think if you see me, somebody who's friends with your partner, as a problem, I think that also shows a certain amount of insecurity that, frankly, probably has nothing to do with me, whether that's you feel like you're not good enough partner or you, for whatever reason can't get as close to your partner. I think that almost is somebody making the friend symbolic of some other issue that's there. Because when you really think about it, it shouldn't be too hard to understand each other's perspective when you have that mutual person in common.

Mia Voss

So, absolutely. And I know we go down the rabbit hole a little bit when it comes to friendships in relation to relationships, but I think it's a huge piece. And I think it's really sneaky. For a lot of people, they don't realize that they're running interference on so many different ways. And then to touch back on another

thing that I love is about the vampire energy. And I think as people are starting to come into the age of getting to know what their personality type in, in the last podcast episode, we talked about attachment styles, as well, too. I think the more that we get to know what our personality types are, and if we know that we're an HSP, which I am and I know that seems new agey, but highly sensitive person it's kind of a more definitive way of talking about being empathic because that you can be highly sensitive but not necessarily (I think) an empath but if you are starting to feel that yes, but I would think a way to gauge it too is like if you're if you're noticing dread or a draining feeling after you meet up with someone, right?

Aimée La Fountain

Absolutely. Always pay attention to how you feel when you're with that person. And I think the pandemic raised the stakes and crystallized a lot of things for us and put things in perspective in terms of worst case scenario. God forbid I could get sick from meeting with a person, you want it to be worthwhile. And so I've done a lot of reassessing of that in the past couple years. Good and bad. And it really makes you pay attention to how much is this person contributing to my life? am I contributing to their life, and life is too short to put in a lot of time and effort into somebody if you don't feel good after you see them? That's not healthy? And chances are that'll probably manifest physically as well.

Mia Voss

I think so, too. I think the stakes have gotten higher. And no matter where you think that we stand as far as where we're at with the pandemic, I think keeping the things that we've learned from that, which is like, how important it is how important time is, obviously. And friendships. And so before we literally did gauge, like, is this worth the risk? I think keeping that mindset of is this worth the risk of I could have been doing something else with my time, they could have been doing something else with their time as well, too. So I think that's a really great point for everybody, a call to action, would be to just assess how you feel after every interaction. That's voluntary, I got to tell you, girl, I don't go to a lot nowadays.

Aimée La Fountain

Because it is yeah, definitely pay attention. You know, I think there's a lot of parallels between friendships and romantic relationships, in terms of how to navigate them. And I know people often say, if you're trying to determine if somebody's right, for you notice how they make you feel and how you feel around them, you know, do you feel like you can be yourself? Do you feel like you're happy? And of course, you're not gonna be happy 24/7. But how does this person make you feel? And I think that is very important with friendships, as well. A lot of my favorite people, a few of them are recent friends as well. A few of my favorite people, two things that stand out to me. One:, I really enjoy myself around them. Two: I feel really safe and comfortable around them. And three, being friends with them makes me a better person. And I would certainly hope they feel the same way about me. But those are three of the most important thing to me. And three of the things that I've noticed, and a few of my recent, really, really recent friendships who thankfully have also become a few of my closest friends. I don't want to sound super negative, because of course, if you don't feel good after you spend time with somebody, that's something to pay attention to. But the reason to look for that also is because there are friends out there who will make you feel like that. which is a beauty. I mean, I can go on forever about how wonderful that is to yourself. So that's what it comes back to.

Mia Voss

It really does. It's so, so juicy to think about those kinds of scenarios. And I think a couple things: I love that you brought up that these are our new friendships, friendships start somewhere. Yeah, right. So that doesn't yet there's the less of a validity to them, or, "Oh, you've only known this person for six months." But I love that the idea of boundaries is, especially as like, now you're going to know you're you're even more equipped to vet that friendship. And if it starts to veer off a little bit. Instead of waiting years and years to figure out that something's not working. I love that of about people make you feel. And then I think also from using these tests, it doesn't mean you're not going to deal with anyone at all, who doesn't meet these. It's more about how much time are you going to spend with them. And I do this a lot with some folks have of having either phone calls or Zoom calls or any kind of interaction. If I am feeling like it is has a draining factor to it, I will set a time limit to it.

Aimée La Fountain

Exactly. it's not a perfect world. We unfortunately cannot completely rule out people who don't make us feel 100% per se. And of course, there's always going to be like you said whether it's mutual friends or parents, there's going to be those friendships where you can't have a dramatic ending and think you're never going to see the person again. There are plenty of people who I'm no longer close to who I've seen multiple times, since I did I have to put distance with them. And of course, I'm cordial and friendly. And it's not very long deficient. It's Hey, how are you, and then you move on, you know, I'm a grown ass woman. And you just leave it at that. But you're right. It's limiting that is important. And I think, by the way, you just made me realize also as well, hopefully we learn from our experiences, we always improve. And I think the beauty is, I was listening to Anderson Cooper and Stephen Colbert talk about grief. And they talked about how our pain helps us be more empathetic to other people. And I love that concept of one friendship or one experience can contribute to another. Because one thing I've noticed and which was the hope of my article is that through going through these difficult situations, ending friendships, I hope that when somebody comes to me in a similar situation, I hope I can give them a few insights that might make the experience a little bit smoother for them, hopefully. So I love that idea of contributing to other people, or hopefully, my experience helping to make things a little easier. Not easy, but easier.

Mia Voss

Oh, I love that. And I think I do like so it's not just the siloed experience that one person has, but it can maybe soften the blow and then add to more emotional intelligence around you too. And that is a great point that we don't have to make it this big dramatic thing, we can just scale back, let off the gas here and push on the gas here to another relationship that serves us better. So it's a work in progress and a flow. Because I think, especially for for women, for people who are associate as women, we do tend to, I know for myself, until I did a lot of work, I had to really get mad about something in order to take action. And just think about all that energy where I had to rev up into complete fury in order to take action. And so I much rather prefer now to easily navigate, navigate through something without a lot of cortisol draining activity to get myself super mad in order to make a change.

Aimée La Fountain

Shit We Don't Talk About Podcast
Episode 70 – Friendship Breakups
Guest: Aimee La Fountain

We never get perfect, but hopefully we keep improving. And I think that goes back to also what you were saying about old friendships and new friendships. I think there's an assumption that old friendship is always better. And that's unfortunately, not always the case. I mean, I have one friend as an example, who I am closer to now than some of my friends who I've known for over a decade. And I also think an important distinction to make, it's kind of a nice silver lining, but I keep in mind is no one person is replaceable, every relationship and friendship is different. But a silver lining that I appreciate is kind of like what you said, we're all busy. And at the end of the day, we all only have so much time. And one thing I take a little bit of solace in is the friendships that were no longer working for me that I've put distance with has given me more time for newer friendships now it's a blossom and becoming closer and better friendships.

Mia Voss

I love that. That is that is a great point to end on, which I love. And we'll have all the links for Amy's article and some other things you've written to in the show notes. But what a great distinction of like, when you do take the time and energy it takes to really stop spending the time there. That really does just expand your world to be spending the time doing the shit. You're supposed to be a labor of love. It is. Amy, thank you so much. This is such a great conversation and it definitely is shit we don't talk about.

Aimée La Fountain

Thank you.

Mia Voss

I appreciate you. Okay, one one final quick question. Do you have a favorite swear word or phrase that you'd like to say?

Oh, oh my goodness.

Mia Voss

No, I threw that out of left field to you.

Aimée La Fountain

I mean, Fuck is a very good active verb and curse. Oh, man. It's so good. There's a something British that I will think of as soon as we're done .

Mia Voss

That in the show notes by the way. Yeah. Well, I like anything that has a C word when Brits say it.

Aimée La Fountain

Everything is a little better the British accent.

Mia Voss

Shit We Don't Talk About Podcast
Episode 70 – Friendship Breakups
Guest: Aimee La Fountain

It is.

Aimée La Fountain

Thank you so much.

Mia Voss

Hey thanks for tuning in. You can check out the show notes and guests links at ShitWeDontTalkAboutPodcast.com. If you liked this episode please subscribe and give it a like or leave a review especially if it's a good one. See you next time bye

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

friends, friendships, friendship, people, person, piece, relationship, romantic relationship, feel, partner, hope, competition, talk, years, navigate, beauty, noticed, intentions, bridesmaid, thought