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LET'S GET REAL

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE YOU WANT TO BE LIKE

By: Ann Marie Sabath

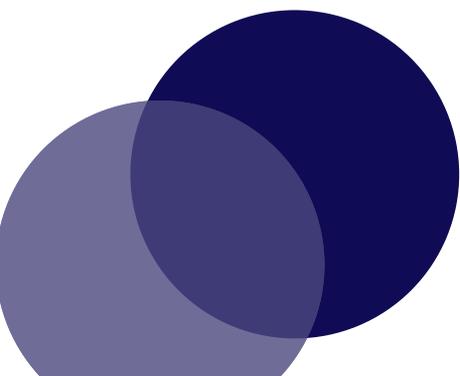
“Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.”
—author unknown

Did you know that the four people with whom you spend the most time are who you become in the future? Scary, isn't it? This fact alone should make you very selective about the company you keep.

Think about the individuals with whom you spend your leisure time. Perhaps you go to dinner with certain people once a month. Or you go to the movies with someone who insists on choosing the films that aren't even of interest to you, but you concede rather than going to the movie of your choice all by yourself.

Whatever the case, recognize that—for better or worse—over time, these people become influencers of your interests, actions, and even how you think.

Make a list of the four people with whom YOU spend the most time. Now, I am not asking you to disinherit your family members. Nor am I recommending that you change jobs—at least not for now. I am talking about the individuals with whom you choose to spend time outside of your family and work lives.



What are the five qualities that these individuals possess? Are they punctual? Fiscally responsible? Well-read? Are they good listeners? Have a thirst for knowledge?

Or are they me, me, me people? Are their reading interests shallow by your standards? Are they constantly sharing their tales of woe without bothering to ask what is going on in your life?

Ask yourself, "Are you reinvigorated after spending time with these people or are you emotionally zapped?" Evaluate the ROI (return on your time investment) with these individuals by asking, "What have I gleaned from these people?" Are you now more fiscally responsible? Have you started reading books based on their author recommendations? Have you acquired a passion in opera, theater, ballet and/or classical music as a result of their interests?

If you realize that you are merely filling time with one of more of these individuals, adjust your relationship by getting together with them less often. You may recognize that the value of the interactions with these people is that these relationships are not based on what they bring to you. Au contraire! Rather, these relationships have value based on YOUR interests, experiences and knowledge. In other words, what you bring to the relationship table. If that is the case, then categorize your time with these people as that of "paying it forward."

At the same time, give serious thought to the interests that you would like to develop and with whom you should surround yourself in order to expand your horizon. Heed counsel from the maven of advice, Oprah Winfrey who has been quoted as saying, "Surround yourself with only people who are going to lift you higher." She certainly is right.

You will gain much satisfaction by giving your time to others. You also will experience a sense of gratification by being intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and/or physically stimulated by the individuals with whom you choose to surround yourself.

It is called the Circle of Life. After all, in the big picture, you have to give to receive.

Ann Marie Sabath is the founder of At Ease Inc., the 31-year-old New York City-based business consulting firm. Her ninth book, *What Self-Made Millionaires Do That Most People Don't: 52 Secrets for Creating Your Own Success*, was just published by Career Press. "Surrounding Yourself with People You Want to Be Like" is one of the 52 Secrets. For more information, visit www.annmariesabath.com.



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