

Comrades in Arms: Friendship and Tough Times

Feeling depressed by the state of the nation? Sucked under by the daily torrent of negative news? Powerless in the grip of forces greater than yourself?

Join the crowd.

In October 2022, the American Psychological Association (APA) released [data](#) showing that 70 percent of adults don't believe their government cares about their well-being and that 64 percent feel their rights are under attack. The study also says, "63% disagreed with the statement, 'I feel our country is on the path to being stronger than ever.'"

In the same month, a Gallup poll [revealed](#) that only 42 percent of Americans believe the next generation will have a better life than their parents, an 18 percent drop in optimism since 2019.

Much of this pessimism surely derives from today's headlines. Each week brings more bad news about such crucial issues as the economy, the ongoing [disaster](#) at our southern border, the misconduct of [agencies like the FBI](#), the attacks on rights and liberties, and the corruption in government at all levels. Add to these the ongoing decay of our [arts](#), our obsession with issues like race and gender, and the absence of shared American values, and it's little wonder that a [large number](#) of citizens have considered fleeing the country.

Take away the promises of a brighter future, and the present becomes a prison rather than a springboard.

Near the end of their article, the APA writers suggest ways of escape from these iron bars and locked doors. And while the APA is [not](#) a bastion of conservatism, they do seem to have hit

the nail on the head with some of this advice. They recommend, for example, breaking the habit of obsessing over worst-case speculation and finding ways to “take control where you can.”

Perhaps most important of all, the writers offer this advice: “Don’t look for a rescuer.” They say:

Asking someone else to solve the problem for you perpetuates the feeling that you are powerless. Rescuers are often actually enablers who keep us from taking responsibility for our own lives. Instead, seek out emotionally supportive friends and family who see you as capable and can help you focus on next steps for addressing your concerns.

Chief among today’s enablers is our own federal government, which treats most Americans like witless children. Our politicians promise us ice cream for dessert if we give them our votes, and an army of bureaucrats and self-identified experts are always on hand to make sure we don’t fall and hurt ourselves. The policies of the COVID-19 pandemic perfectly illustrate this approach: Instead of making recommendations as you might to an adult, officials became waspish nannies armed with regulations and paddles for the recalcitrant. They are the wardens of the prison.

But friends and family, as the APA suggests, can lead us into sunlight and freedom.

Some men, women, and children already know full well the strength and reassurance friendship provides. Whether we’ve experienced a rough day in school or at the office, or whether we’re fearful that our country is headed for the dumpster, the comforts of those we cherish can bring us solace and put a little steel in our backbones.

Yet many among us are missing the intimacy, trust, and support found in a true friend. Even before the COVID lockdowns took their toll on companionship, large numbers of Americans were

suffering from an [epidemic of loneliness](#). They might have had acquaintances from the workplace or followers on social media, but they lacked a friend in the flesh, who is worth more than any number of Facebook contacts.

If you're a part of this group, and if you're lonely, it can be difficult to make connections in today's era. But the first step is to know that making a change in life is possible. Making a small change in your routine by going somewhere new, taking a class, or hosting an event and having any connections bring their other friends are a few ways to get started. If you've lost touch with relatives, or if those relationships just need a shot in the arm, pick up the phone and make the effort to reestablish those connections.

Or if you find yourself surrounded by great friends, make an effort to reach out to anyone you know who may be lonely. Host a party or board game night and create an environment where people can mingle and meet others.

No matter how tough and independent we may think we are, we need these comrades in arms to thrive as human beings and to stand against the trials and wickedness the world throws at us. They help us keep alive our hopes and dreams—and so keep alive the future.

And just as importantly, they need us.

—

Image credit: PxHere, [CC0 1.0](#)

[ITO](#)