

MY BEST FRIEND

Angela Seitz

Business Administration
Lake Zurich Senior High School, Lake Zurich, Illinois

A good friend is truly a blessing. A good friend is someone who will accept you for who you are and will always be there for you even in the rockiest of times. My best friend means the world to me. My best friend, Cathleen Cooke, is so important to me; there is nothing in this world that has ever equaled our friendship.

I would like to begin by telling the history of my relationship with Cathleen. We are both heavily involved in athletics, so it seems rather appropriate that we first met at a soccer tryout in the seventh grade. We were both trying out for a spot on the exclusive Illinois State Select soccer team. There were one hundred and sixty-four girls testing their abilities against each other for a mere sixteen available spots on the team. Cathleen and I were placed in the same group and immediately our personalities clicked. After introducing ourselves, we discovered that we were from neighboring towns and that we had mutual acquaintances. I will never forget my initial meeting with Cathleen. The first thing I think of when I recollect my first meeting with Cathleen is the ease in which she carried herself. That ease had a calming effect on me.

Fortunately, Cathleen and I both were named to the final roster of sixteen girls. As a result, we were invited to attend a national soccer camp for the nation's premiere youth players. Before heading off to Wisconsin for camp, Cathleen and I talked often and in great detail. We discussed our many emotions: our fear, our anxiety, but most of all, our excitement and eager anticipation. Oddly enough, Cathleen and I never felt a strong sense of competition between us because we are both fairly confident individuals and though we both are extremely competitive individuals, we never felt the need to outdo each other. We grew really close through our nightly talks and get-togethers. We went shopping together for matching soccer outfits and we were so excited when we found matching soccer ball scrunchies. After weeks of preparation, Cathleen and I were ready to face this great feat!

Soccer camp arrived soon enough and before we knew it, my father was driving Cathleen and me to the University of Wisconsin where the camp was being held. When we arrived, we went to the registration table only to discover that we had been assigned roommates and worst of all, we were not placed in the same room. We thought for sure that we would never survive that week of camp without each other as roommates.

Ironically, we grew closer through our brief separation. We would still find time for each other through meals in which we would discuss our roommates, our coaches, and of course the cute boys down the hall in our dorm. Through this experience, I learned to value my relationship with Cathleen even more. I grew to appreciate any time that we spent together.

One week later, camp had come to an abrupt halt. We were sad to leave, but being only thirteen years of age, we grew homesick, and although we would never admit it, we were looking forward to seeing our families again.

The following summer, Cathleen and I were recruited to play on the same club soccer team, Buffalo Grove. We did everything together that summer. We would discuss our first boyfriends, our terrible curfews, our annoying siblings, and just life in general.

Because we live in different towns, we were forced to attend different high schools. I was so frightened that through the separation, Cathleen and I would grow apart in high school. I feared that we would each meet new friends and eventually abandon each other. The opposite came true, though. Now that I look back at it, I am glad that we went to different high schools because it enabled us to meet new people and create new friendships on our own. We remained close throughout high school. In addition to playing on the same club team, Buffalo Grove, we also stayed close through our nightly telephone discussions. We would share gossip about our mutual acquaintances, our boyfriends, and life overall. Cathleen began going out with her current boyfriend, John, right around the same time that my boyfriend, Justin and I began dating. It was wonderful; we would often double-date to movies, dinners, and parties.

Cathleen was always there for me throughout high school. She was one of the first people to comfort me after hearing about my mother's diagnosis of breast cancer my sophomore year of high school and she was always there to listen to me complain or cry about my bickerings with Justin. Likewise, I would listen to her talk about John, her difficulties with math, and her frustrations with her younger brother. I am not especially gifted at math, but I served as an outlet for Cathleen to vent her frustrations with math. In addition to consoling each other in hard times, we would also be there to bask in each other's happiness. I remember when we first got our driver's licenses and I will never forget that first night on the town. We thought that we were the coolest individuals alive. I remember telling her that I was inducted into the National Honor Society and she told me that she was also. I vividly remember hugging her when we were both named to the Illinois All-State soccer team and I will never forget the look on her face when she told me that John said "I love you"

for the first time. There are so many great times that we shared in life, but it is the little things that I will remember most about our friendship. I will remember our secret handshakes, and our matching scrunchies. And I know that I will never forget our little walkie-talkies that we used to communicate with each other at soccer camp.

Although we are both in college now, we still remain close through frequent email correspondences and phone calls. She is a sophomore at Northwestern University. We discussed the option of attending the same college, but we both came to the conclusion that it would be best if we did not because then we would be in a position to meet many new people.

Although we are alike in many ways, we still differ in certain matters, such as the men we prefer, academic areas of interest and even the positions we play in soccer (I play center forward, while Cathleen is an exceptional defender). In addition, Cathleen has more explosive speed than I do, but I can outlast her on the field. I take great comfort in the fact that no matter what else may change in my life, she will remain the one constant. Next to my parents, she is my greatest supporter in life. She always reassures me that I can do anything in life if I put forth my best effort. When I am down, she tells me that I have many unique and extraordinary talents to offer.

Perhaps the greatest aspect to a genuine friendship is the learning process that occurs between true friends. Cathleen has enabled me to see a different side to many things in life, and as a result, I have matured a great deal. She has taught me the importance of many vital characteristics without even realizing the impact that she has had in my life. For example, she has shown me the necessity of patience in life in dealing with others. Simply by being around her, I have witnessed her patience and her unique sense of understanding for others. Now, I strive to always make a conscientious effort to be patient with others and consequently, I have been more patient with myself! Also, my friendship with Cathleen has taught me about persistence. I have always admired Cathleen's continuous drive to excel and it has motivated me to work extremely hard as well. I have implemented some of her work patterns, such as running four to five miles a day. In essence, Cathleen has taught me so much about life; she is the greatest teacher that I could ever ask for.