December 2013

Friend or Beau?

Leah De Graaf  
*Iowa State University*

Tam Vo  
*Iowa State University*

Liz Zabel  
*Iowa State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos)

Part of the [Higher Education Commons](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos), [Interpersonal and Small Group Communication Commons](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos), [Journalism Studies Commons](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos), and the [Social Psychology and Interaction Commons](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos)

**Recommended Citation**

Available at: [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos/vol2014/iss2/7](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos/vol2014/iss2/7)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethos by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).
We’ve seen it in romantic comedies, sitcoms and even on this season of “The Bachelor.” Friends of the opposite sex either become Mr. and Mrs. Chandler Bing or are sent home at the Rose Ceremony. But what about in between? Can friends that move ahead romantically go back to being just friends?

Looking back on it now, Justin D’Souza, junior in biology, is glad he and his ex-girlfriend worked things out after a nasty break-up in high school. “We are bros,” says D’Souza of his now ex-girlfriend. According to him, his situation is ideal, but not all breakups end as easy as his. So what do you do if a close friend hints at something more?

The first step is to ask a vital and obvious question, says Mark Redmond, communication studies professor. “Do I want to risk losing this friendship for a chance at something more?” Ultimately, Redmond warns against hiding true feelings. No matter what “it will come out in your behavior,” says Redmond. The best option is to be open and direct. If your true feelings are for something more than friendship, simply ask, “Have you ever thought about going on a date sometime?” If the response is, “Yeah, I have thought about it,” take the bait. What if the response is the dreaded no? How do you bounce back and still remain friends?

STEP 1: COMMUNICATION

The first step is to ask a vital and obvious question, says Mark Redmond, communication studies professor. “Do I want to risk losing this friendship for a chance at something more?” Ultimately, Redmond warns against hiding true feelings. No matter what “it will come out in your behavior,” says Redmond. The best option is to be open and direct. If your true feelings are for something more than friendship, simply ask, “Have you ever thought about going on a date sometime?” If the response is, “Yeah, I have thought about it,” take the bait. What if the response is the dreaded no? How do you bounce back and still remain friends?

STEP 2: COOLING-OFF PERIOD

If you really threw a curveball to your friend, take a break from each other for a few days (or months). Tina Coffelt, communication studies professor, suggests a cooling-off period before friends move ahead in salvaging the relationship. From her own experience, Coffelt has learned a period of cooling off might even lead to some valuable reflection.

After a year and a half of friendship with a particularly charming male friend, Coffelt asked him if he was interested in going out. Not uncommonly, he was very uncomfortable and taken aback. For the next few months there was a long period of cooling off with little to no contact. After those few months, Mr. Charming came around, realized what he was missing and they started dating. D’Souza spent six months not speaking to his ex-girlfriend before they could move on.

STEP 3: REKINDLING THE FRIENDSHIP

Once everyone’s true feelings come out it might feel like you can never go back to what you had before, but if you stop mentioning it and move on there is a good chance you can regain a valuable friendship. According to Redmond, the best way to bounce back after a rejection is to confirm that you will still remain friends and drop the subject.

In the end it’s really about reading the hints other people give off. “It is really about having a pulse on the other person,” says Coffelt. Being able to identify flirtation cues goes a long way in deciphering what a friend might be feeling. So are you going to sit around and wait for your best friend to finally get the clues and ask you out, or are you going to take the leap, no regrets? Or, you know, you could just try out the friends-with-benefits bit; it seemed to work well for Mila Kunis and Justin Timberlake.