

## Help or Please Your Friend? Which Is Right?

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In giving advice, seek to help, not please, your friend.

- Solon

This simple, concise maxim delivers a great wealth of benefit.

Why would you not want to please your friend, rather than to help him? Because friends are not for pleasing.

We please those from whom we hope or expect some gain for ourselves. We please those about whom we feel superior, in gracious gestures of beneficence. We seldom do gestures to please our equals, other than our mate, even though they might greatly appreciate them.

Pleasing someone is like buying their love or respect. A friend doesn't want what he already has, by definition, as a friend.

Helping a friend does not always mean pleasing him either. Often you can help your friend by providing opposition against which he may carefully consider a choice of action which could prove risky. Or he may be thinking along one line of thought without considering arguments or facts that oppose or contradict them. A bad choice or political association or religious affiliation would be examples.

A friend does not necessarily want to know that you have helped him. Pride may make him want to hide or disguise his need for help. It's not uncommon for people with a serious need to have few friends, not because others don't want to help, but because the person with the need may subconsciously back away from a close relationship for fear of the other person finding out his need and considering it a weakness.

A need or a weakness may be among the things a person least wants another to know. Even though we all have them and we often can't resolve our needs or overcome our weaknesses ourselves. We have been taught that we must be independent, that appearing to be self sufficient is even more important than actually being self sufficient.

Help may be what your friend most needs. Yet it may be something you must use care to put into effect in order to preserve your friendship. A real friendship involves needs that each can help the other with. It may need to be done with care so that the friend is helped up rather than made to feel lower by being needy.

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