

# friends like these

**Y**ou wouldn't swap your best friend for anything, but there's something about having a group of mates - shared history, mutual understanding - that gives you a perspective on the world you can't find anywhere else. Your lives may change at different rates, and sometimes you'll be closer to one person than another, but chances are there will always be someone who understands where you're at and what led you there.

These are the friends who listen as you moan about your boss, help you pick out a dress for a date, or drop everything to look after your kids in a crisis. And the fact that it's sometimes difficult to find time to see them just means it's more important than ever that you do.

Here, we take a look inside the friendship between four women - the flashpoints, jokes, good and bad times. Emma W, Emma K, Francesca and Gabrielle, all from London, have known each other since their teens. They talk regularly by phone and generally meet up at least once a month for dinner where, says Fran, 'we sit round, chat and have a laugh'. We catch up with them on one of those nights.

## What do you envy about each other's lives?

**EMMA K** 'Fran has a really good partnership; they're very happy and their son Jamie is lovely. And I envy the fact Emma has a new man and he's incredibly good for her, even though she doesn't want to admit it. I also envy Gabby for being in a long-term relationship. God, isn't that funny? I just talked about all their relationships...'  
**GABBY** 'I really respect Emma W for her job. It's mind-boggling that she's so patient. I think our politics are very similar but she puts her money where her mouth is. I wish I could be that giving.'

## Have you ever grown apart?

**EMMA K** 'There have been a few periods where

we've been less close but I always count the others as my best friends. For instance, Fran's had a baby and her circumstances are so completely different from mine that naturally we didn't have so much in common for a

time. As she was the first one to have a baby, it must have been quite a lonely experience because we just couldn't share the situation.'  
**FRAN** 'I certainly felt out of it for a while. And it's only in the past few months that I feel as if our friendships are back to normal. When I first had Jamie I was scared because I thought it would always be me being knackered, and my friends going, "Oh, you're so crap; you can't go out." I did feel like I'd lost something for a while.'

**EMMA K** 'It's happened many times in our relationship. Before it used to make me scared that we would just drift apart completely, but now so many years have passed that I feel it's okay, that we'll organically move together again.'

**FRAN** 'A big part of my heart is taken up with my son now so I would imagine you've been through periods of feeling neglected by me.'

**EMMA K** 'We can put up with a lot more than you think we can. You always believe that you shouldn't put us through something, and I think you underestimate us in that way.'

## Getting over the bad times

**FRAN** 'I lived in Australia for a year and a half, and part of the reason I came back abruptly was because I was living with a guy and he died suddenly. The three of them were just amazing. They listened to me for hours, sat through my weird moods, my acute depression, my going a bit bonkers - all the emotions you go through after a trauma like that.'

**GABBY** 'I've had big life events, whether that's the birth and death of a child [Gabrielle and

Girl's girl, man's woman, crowd pleaser - your group of friends reveals more about you than you think. Catherine Jarvie talks to four women to find out what makes their relationships work. Photograph Andrew Montgomery



FROM TOP: Fran and Emma K aged 14; at a picnic in 1997; Emma W, Fran and Gabby soak up the rays in Tobago

## The diplomat

**FRANCESCA COOGL 35, MOTHER AND PART-TIME AROMATHERAPIST**  
**MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND:** Breathing deeply at TriYoga Primrose Hill, London.  
**WHAT SHE LOOKS FOR IN A FRIENDSHIP:** 'Someone who understands whatever I'm going through, and who generally isn't judgemental.'  
**FRIENDSHIP FLASHPOINTS:** 'I can't bear it when people are late.'  
**WHAT HER FRIENDS SAY ABOUT HER:** 'When Gabby and Emma W are talking politics, Fran and I [Emma K] are more likely to be discussing shampoo. But she's so the diplomat of the group - she's very good at being everyone's point of view on things.'

## The dark horse

**EMMA WILLIAMS, 35, HUMAN RIGHTS WORKER**

**MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND:** In bed, catching up on some sleep.  
**WHAT SHE LOOKS FOR IN A FRIENDSHIP:** 'Loyalty, and someone to have a laugh with.'  
**FRIENDSHIP FLASHPOINTS:** 'I can be intolerant, but it depends on the person and the situation.'  
**WHAT HER FRIENDS SAY ABOUT HER:** 'She's very committed in her career but a bit of a party girl outside. Before she met her new boyfriend, she and Emma K were always going clubbing or on holidays together.'

## The hostess

**GABRIELLE OSRIN, 35, TV PRODUCER/DIRECTOR**

**MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND:** Balancing ante-natal classes with a bit of indulgent food shopping.  
**WHAT SHE LOOKS FOR IN A FRIENDSHIP:** 'An ability not to take the small things too seriously.'  
**FRIENDSHIP FLASHPOINTS:** 'Unreliability. I hate it when people don't return calls.'  
**WHAT HER FRIENDS SAY ABOUT HER:** 'Her hospitality is legendary - she has a big house and is always inviting us round for barbecues and dinner parties.'

## The emotional one

**EMMA KERSHAW, 35, ACTOR/SINGER**

**MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND:** Chatting up good-looking guys. On at least one occasion she's been seen using her flirting skills on two tables of men simultaneously.  
**WHAT SHE LOOKS FOR IN A FRIENDSHIP:** 'Someone I can have a laugh with and really talk to.'  
**FRIENDSHIP FLASHPOINTS:** 'I can't stand it when people don't keep their word - I hate general flakiness, really.'  
**WHAT HER FRIENDS SAY ABOUT HER:** 'If there's mischief afoot, chances are she's behind it. And though she can be quite high-maintenance emotionally, she's always there for us.'

