

## Friends through Thick and Thin

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Is it just me, or do we underestimate the effect our friends, family members and co-workers have on us?

Do we ignore the subtler power – both positive and negative – they exert?

Is our ultimate personal and professional success partially dependent upon those we hang around with?

I started pondering the answers to these questions after reading a USA Today article titled “Obesity can run in social circles,” (July 26, 2007) written by Nanci Heimlich. The author summarized the findings of a National Institute on Aging research study which concluded that peoples’ propensity to gain and lose weight is directly, and indirectly, influenced by members of their social group.

I somewhat skeptical at first - that is, until I thought back on some of my own experiences - like how I played far better tennis when I my opponent’s skill was superior to my own.

Or how much harder I worked to create a compelling presentation for co-workers I respected...

Or how I often I gauged the validity of my ideas, dreams or behaviors on my older sister’s condemnation or praise...

Or how easily I overspent on a Kate Spade handbag when egged on by an exuberant friend...

Gratefully, after reflecting for a while I realized that I have, and continue to, surround myself with people who consistently challenge me physically, mentally and emotionally – yet, provide me much-needed havens where silliness and immaturity reign, at least temporarily.

Additionally any success, however limited, that I’ve ultimately achieved is due in large part to these folks... through their generous and patient coaching I was able to harness my energy, articulate my goals, develop a plan and focus my attention. It’s often the difference between “making it” or not.

So, when you have a minute take a closer look at those you include in your own inner circle, and ask yourself whether they are unwittingly raising or lowering your personal or professional standards.

What do you think?

To Your Success

David and Mary Scarborough