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The primary reason we need to hide our goats is because of the different people who calculatingly or unintentionally hunt them down. These can include family members, coworkers, bosses, subordinates, neighbors, acquaintances, children and utter strangers we encounter on a daily basis. For this eArticle, we will take an in-depth look at the most unpredictable of all, the disingenuous friend.

Sometimes a friendship becomes unhealthy and needs to end. How can you tell when it reaches that stage? Too many times friends are getting your goat by using you for selfish ulterior purposes, or their natural personality ends up constantly irritating or hurting you. While breaking up with a friend is difficult, it is necessary if you are going to put yourself and your needs first. Life should not be mind-numbing and wearisome. When you prolong relationships with people who see their world through tainted glasses, you are at risk of being imprisoned by their negative views and not your own. Remember, all friendships are volunteer situations. You are not required to continue *any* of them.

There are many compelling reasons to end a friendship. Before you do, however, list yours as well as concrete examples of your friend's behavior to support them. These may include major deal breakers or something as understated as you no longer have shared interests. You may even want to ask advice from your family members or others, especially people who know your friend well and may be able to provide insight. One caution, though: mutual friends may feel the need to pick sides, so you may end up compromising additional relationships.

Here is some ammunition that goat hunters posing as friends may have in their armory.

- **They are possessive and overly demanding.** Their constant requests for your time and attention prevent you from forming stronger, more meaningful friendships. They are inclined to be resentful of your other relationships, and while they are

good one-on-one with you, they have difficulty socializing with other people. They also persuade you to participate in activities that really don't interest you. You involve yourself out of a sense of obligation rather than enjoyment or personal enrichment.

- **They disregard your view of a situation and are judgmental.** They manipulate you by constantly making you feel inferior or guilty. They are never wrong, and even when they are, an admission of guilt isn't part of their repertoire. They defend, excuse and explain all of their behaviors, and also delight in pointing out your deficiencies. Their insecurities are a pathetic excuse for their behavior, and yet when all is said and done, you are the one who feels horrible. You feel like nothing you say or do can ameliorate the situation, so you all too often overlook it and continue the circle of the irrational and wondrous entanglement referred to as "friendship." People who are critical and judgmental have low self-esteem. This can intensify as they get older and poison any relationships they form as an adult. These so-called friends often disguise their emotions until something triggers their more negative nature.
- **You no longer trust your friend because of something they did or said.** If they spilled one of your secrets or spoke poorly about you behind your back, you have a legitimate reason to revoke your trust. For some people, that loss of trust may irreversibly affect the friendship.
- **They are selfish.** You may help them with their problems, but they rarely reciprocate. Yes, you might shrug off this lack of consideration as just being part of your friend's personality, but it's still an inexcusably serious issue.

The moment of truth is deciding what to do. Do you want to maintain an acquaintanceship or completely cut the friend out of your life? The reason list you produce may help you decide how contaminated the friendship is.

You must meet this goat hunter head-on. Entering the confrontation, be open to the possibility that your opinion may change. Express your feelings absolutely and unequivocally. As daunting as initiating this conversation will be, it must be done. Losing a friend hurts, but what hurts even more is when someone causes you to lose your focus, your direction and, most importantly, your identity.

When you finally sit down with this person, avoid personal attacks. Rather, calmly state your observations and concerns about their behavior, and speak in terms of how those actions have made you feel. If you use "I" messages to convey how their oversight, selfishness or insecurities may have hurt you, they'll be more receptive of your comments and more inclined to change.

Remain composed. The other person may become angry or even counter your challenging statements with complaints of their own about you. If this happens, calmly but firmly state that this is *your* time to talk and their time to listen. Don't let them interrupt you or

divert the conversation away from its original purpose.

A long-time friend may ask why you're suddenly bringing up issues now after so many years. Well, realize that your friend is likely not the only one to blame for the strain; **you are also changing** and realizing things about yourself, perhaps reaching a point where your tolerance level for certain behaviors has maxed out.

Can a tainted friendship be salvaged? Possibly. Hear your friend out. It may be that he or she expresses sincere contrition and makes a pledge to change. If you still decide enough's enough, burn your bridges carefully. Restarting a friendship down the road can be especially difficult. Be absolutely certain you want to end things if that's the path you choose.

Even if you decide to stay friends and give this person another chance, both of you may need a temporary break to think things through and clear your heads. Jumping right back into the friendship at this stage may cause unintended tension and pretense. Step back and reset. Change won't happen overnight.

It is always our choice whether we get on with our lives and live based on who we are instead of chaining ourselves to people who hold grudges and are not enriching. Go with your gut. If you feel it's better to end the friendship and move on, end it. Don't feel compelled to give the person another chance just because you're nice. No moral code binds you to such an obligation. You've already been dragged down by this person, and you should only continue with the friendship if there's some positive aspect of staying close to them that you'd like to preserve. Remember that you need an actual *reason to stay friends* with this person, not a *reason not to stay friends*. Put your needs and considerations first.

There comes a time in your life when you walk away from all the drama and the people who create it. You surround yourself with people who make you laugh and feel good about the person you are. Forget the bad; focus on the good. Love the people who treat you right; pray for the ones who don't. You may feel guilty, but if you know you made the right decision for yourself, stand by it. Life is too short to be anything but happy.

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*Up Next...*

## Teaching an Old Goat New Tricks

*Part four of this series will concentrate on how to keep hold of your goats once they're herded. Knowing WHAT gets your goat, WHY it gets your goat and WHO hunts your goat are all crucial to hiding your goat. Just as important, it is necessary to acquire a measure of goat wisdom—or, shall we say, the HOW—to keep your goats hidden in the stable. Until next month, beware of the hunters!*

***"Over the course of the summer, I had the privilege to coach FISC's ACE Team (ACE = Aligned, Competent and Engaged group of our high performing, high potential employees) on the strategies deployed in ENJOY THE RIDE as part of our leadership development program. Each ACE team member was given a copy of your book, and we dedicated one session per chapter. During each meeting, we openly discussed each team member's personal and professional takeaways and ah-ha moments. It was a great way to read through the book and make application of the concepts you describe for enjoying our journey through life. You have made a difference and positively impacted many close to me, including myself and my husband, because we took the time to read your book ENJOY THE RIDE!"***

**Kristine Avery, Senior Vice President of Human Resources, FISC Solutions**

# Steve's Nov. 2012 Schedule

**NOVEMBER 2012**

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2	Austin, TX
3	Greenville, SC
8	Harleysville, PA
9	Detroit, MI
10	Biloxi, MS
13	Atlantic City, NJ
15	Casper, WY
16	Raleigh, NC
18	Orlando, FL
22	THANKSGIVING
27	St. Cloud, MN
29	St. Louis, MO
30	Greenbush, MN



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