

Podcast transcript: Friendships and Brotherly Love

Frank Kaufmann

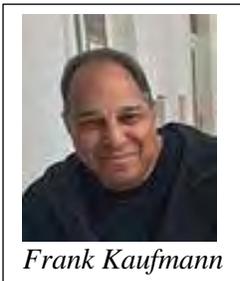
October 2, 2023



There's this fellow I know, whom I would ordinarily call a friend, but for me, he's more of an elder brother. For this particular relationship, the term friend (a term I truly treasure) feels a touch too casual. The overlay and reality of the blood relationship feels more right in this particular case.

There are a great many similarities between having a true friend, and a good elder brother, but the subtle differences are significant. The same freedoms can eventually arise, the same bonds of loyalty can evolve, and the same ease it would take to give one's life for the other also can characterize both relationships. The differences come up in ways I think are more likely to elude Westerners and come more naturally to folks in Eastern cultures.

The differences have to do with structures in place before the relationship even begins to happen. Some cultures tend to flatten or homogenize these positions. We're all equal, respect is earned, and other assumptions that reject the idea that social positions and structure are important. Like strolling past a four-year-old in a Mall in America addressing his mom, "Hey Sally.". Other cultures are more careful, and might even ask, Is this aunt my father's sister or my mother's sister? Is she my father's (or mother's) elder or younger sister?



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Some people might think attention to these details obstructs the potential of the relationship, forcing people to behave in pre-established roles and behaviour. Others might take an opposite view, and think that knowing positions more precisely will help the relationship grow into far greater freedom and beauty.

One way to begin to see how distinctions, nuances, and greater definition of positions is a plus might be to think of a good musical group or a baseball team.

Whether a player is a third-baseman or shortstop might be compared similarly to knowing whether my aunt is older than my mother or younger. The subtleties and nuances between the two positions give rise to the unique beauty and magic in the way the players relate to one another, and the elegance and mystique of a given play. A musical group is similar; the bassist is not the rhythm guitarist. A piece of music that may become a friend for life might be thanks to the roles, distinctions, some might say the "constraints" of each player to know and conform to his or her position.

What I mean to offer by providing these examples is that it can be said that the rigours of structures and positions might be exactly what gives birth to the true freedom, poetry, and beauty of a relationship that, like a shortstop or a rhythm guitarist, starts with known roles that define and give unbound grace to all the rest of its relationships.



This “friend” whom I’ve come to hold wholly as my literal elder brother died young, now getting on to quite some years ago., fifteen to be exact. A great loss. I have no other older siblings. But I stay in touch. Even across the great divide. I report in, read stuff from back in the day, and pause with a picture. The eyes, the smile.

If you can find a way that stays normal, not contriving spooky stuff, the Great Divide really isn’t all that great.

I do the same with a few others without whose help and love my life is harder and less complete.

This elder brother gets me through a lot of days with all kinds of better ways, ideas, and styles, exactly in that unique way that is the purview of good elder siblings. They care in a special way, kind of like a parent who isn’t from another generation. They’re close. They know you, but simultaneously somehow care from above. A wonderful human invention that probably holds the key to making the world better.

I am glad I have the pictures, the notes and the shared stuff, the eyes, the smile, the care, and the day-to-day visits.

I think more people could easily hang on to these sorts of things if the whole idea of ongoing relationships in this way was allowed to be seen as reasonable, and not nuts.

Caught those eyes and got that cool caring love today as I was wondering how to make my way through this day today. There’s much more to life than meets the eye. We may be more lucky than we know

Thanks for listening

Talk again soon