

# Love and Friendship in Your 30s

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I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's episode is a conversation about love and friendship in your 30s. The transcript for this episode is available to members of *Easy Stories in English Premium*, who also get this episode early. You can join *Easy Stories in English Premium* for just a few dollars a month to get ad-free episodes and bonus content. To join, go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Support](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Support). Then you'll get a special feed with all the bonus content, where you can also find the transcript for this episode.

So, the title of this episode, 'Love and Friendship in Your 30s' – I don't know, I feel like this is a topic that a lot of people talk about. It's maybe a bit of a cliché: a phrase, a topic that comes up a lot. It makes me think of romantic comedies. It's those silly films about falling in love.

But honestly, I recently turned 30 and I recently moved to London. And in the process of moving to London, I ended a long-term relationship, a relationship that lasted almost three years. And I also ended a short-term relationship, a relationship that lasted a few months. So suddenly I am single again and living in London in my 30s. So this topic has felt very relevant to me.

I didn't realise how used I was to living with a partner. I didn't realise how normal it was for me to live with a partner and all the things that come with that. It's a very different way of living. Now I have to cook meals for myself, and I find it really hard to motivate myself to cook just for me.

Usually I cook a big meal. And then I save lots of leftovers, like I take parts of the food I cooked and put it in the fridge and the freezer to eat throughout the week. We call this batch cooking, and obviously batch cooking is very useful because it means you don't have to cook so often. But it's also quite boring, because then I eat the same meal all week.

But at the same time, I can't motivate myself to cook a different meal for myself every day. Like, I should. I should. It would be good for me. I do find cooking relaxing, but I also find it stressful. And then if you're buying lots of different ingredients to make different meals, it can be hard to use them all up. And then they go bad, and then you have to throw them away, and then you feel guilty for wasting food, oh my god, it's a nightmare!

The other thing I find weird is, because I work from home, I can go through a whole day, sometimes even two days, without talking to anyone. And it's so nice when you live with a partner, to just have someone to, like, talk to in the morning, at mealtimes, to go for a walk with, you know. Even if they're at work during the day, you can spend the evening together.

And that's another thing, um, there are lots of things I want to go out and do that I either have to do with a friend, or by myself. And doing it with friends, I love. It's just that people are very disorganised. People are very busy. It's very hard to organise going out to the cinema with a friend. It's very hard to be spontaneous.

I feel like since COVID-19, everything is so planned. So many restaurants and, I don't know, art galleries want you to book in advance. You have to buy a ticket before you go. But sometimes you get there and it's empty and it's like, okay, so why did I have to book in advance? You're not busy, you know?

The other thing that's weird, of course, is dating. I'm dating again for the first time in a long time. And, I mean, I understand myself much better than I used to. I know who I am. I

know what I'm looking for in a relationship. So that's good. But at the same time it means a lot of dating feels strange. Like it feels like, where is this going?

You know, in the past, a lot of my relationships started off very passionate, very fiery, loads of energy. Whoa. We were crazy about each other. And then it kind of calmed down after a few months. Sometimes it petered out. When we say something peters out, it means it slowly dies. So, a lot of my past relationships started very passionate, and then it petered out, and, you know, I had a lot of relationships that lasted less than a year, let's put it that way.

So now I'm more careful and, I don't know, I just sometimes go on dates and, it doesn't feel amazing, it doesn't feel terrible, it's just a bit Meh. So, meh, it's a slang word, and it just means, like, average, not very interesting. I think a lot of dating feels meh to me. I find using dating apps really boring. Like, oh, we have to send so many messages and then we'll go on a date and the date might just be meh. Like, it's a lot of time and energy and effort.

So I've decided to not use the apps, or at least not use them very much, and just to try meeting people in my everyday life. But that also feels difficult, because you never know where you're going to meet someone.

And at the same time, I feel like all my friends are pairing up. All my friends are getting into relationships, or are in relationships. And actually, there are a few people who I had a crush on, like a few people who I liked and maybe wanted to be in a relationship with, and then I moved to London and then I was like, great, we live in the same city, we can do something. And then they all got into relationships and I'm like, no, you should have waited for me!

Now, to be fair, most people, when they turn 30, have the experience that all of their friends start getting married and start having children. I haven't really had that experience. I do have friends of lots of different ages, but also most of my friends are queer. Most of my friends are gay or bisexual or whatever.

And so there's not so much that traditional path of getting married and having kids. So actually, I can't think of any friends right now off the top of my head, I can't think of any friends who have got married or are getting married.

When we say 'off the top of my head', it means trying to remember something right now. Like, if I sat down and tried to think of friends who got married recently, I probably could think of a few. But right here, off the top of my head, I can't think of any.

So I think I've talked in the past about being polyamorous. So polyamory is when you have relationships with multiple people. Obviously, consensually, like, you tell the people that you're doing this and you agree on it, you don't do it without permission. Um, and I've been polyamorous the past few years, but honestly, being single again has made me realise that the thing I want the most is just one partner.

Obviously, maybe I'll want to be polyamorous with that partner, but I don't want to date lots of people casually. Like, I don't want to have several casual relationships. I want to have at least one serious relationship, probably where we live together or spend a lot of time together. I'm not saying I necessarily want to settle down.

Settling down is when you buy a house, have kids, you know, you kind of really commit to one relationship. I'm probably not ready for that kind of commitment, that level of seriousness. But, um, I would like to have a partner I live with and have that deep connection with. The thing I've realised that is my main need in a relationship, the thing I really want, is intellectual stimulation.

I want to have someone who I have deep conversations with about art and philosophy and literature. And I'll be honest, my need in this area is very high. I do have friends who I

can have these conversations with, but I can't talk to them all the time, right? So that's frustrating. To be honest, if I had a strong friend group who I saw regularly or I was part of a very close community, I probably wouldn't feel the need to be in a relationship right now.

But that's very difficult, you know. Modern society really isolates us because of the internet. It's much easier to move to different places to do new kinds of jobs like I do. My kind of work was not possible before the internet, right? But at the same time, you can move somewhere and have no connection with the local community, and it can feel very difficult to integrate. When you integrate into a community, you become part of it. Instead of being separate, you are together. You are integrated.

Now, to be fair, I have been trying. There is a really great church, a Christian church, that I've been going to. It's a very progressive church. They're very welcoming to queer people. They do an LGBT mass, an LGBT service once a month. They get involved with a lot of political activities.

So I really love the church, and I've been getting involved with that a lot. But it's not local, right? It's not that close to me. So I really want to get involved with some local stuff as well. There's like a park and some woodlands near me where I could volunteer to help pick up litter, help with the plants and stuff like that.

Oh, by the way, I talked about litter picking. So litter is when people throw rubbish on the ground, and that's litter. You really should throw your litter in a bin. And so in nice places like parks and woodlands, there are often volunteers who go and pick up the litter. They do litter picking.

I also have to recognize that because I am self-employed and I work from home, I have a lot more free time than most people. I have friends who work full-time office jobs, they have to commute to work, they have to travel to work, and in London the commute is often quite long and stressful.

So, you know, it's harder for me. I have more social needs, I guess, because I have all this time by myself. But at the same time, I'm very lucky. I can go to art galleries or the theatre during the week when they're not as busy, because there are so many amazing museums and art galleries in London. But if you go on the weekend, it's horrible, it's so busy. So there are lots of places I'm planning on going to maybe on like a Monday morning or a Wednesday morning where it's less busy.

All of this stuff about being isolated and finding it hard to connect with people, I really do think technology has made things worse. And I read a book recently that really cleared this up for me, really clarified it for me. The book is called *Conflict is Not Abuse*. It's quite a serious book about conflicts within communities and politics. It's very interesting, but it's quite like a serious, academic read in some ways. But this section about technology is more general.

So the author argues that, in the past, we mainly communicated through phone calls, and now we mainly communicate through text messages, and this has made communication a lot harder. For example, let's say you want to organise to meet up with a friend in a week's time, you want to go to a museum together, but you don't know when they're free, they don't know when you're free, you don't know if they've got other things happening on certain days, uh, you don't know what kind of, um, museum they're interested in, how far they have to travel, you know, there are so many variables, right?

And if you organise it by text message, you might have to say, Oh, let's meet up. Oh, we can do next week. What days can you do? I can do this day. They say the days they can do. What time can you do? Where do you want to go? Okay. We've chosen the time in the

museum, but are we going to meet at the station or at the museum and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

There are all of these small things, right? Whereas if you just had a five minute conversation, you could probably sort it out quite quickly. And then also, hearing their voice, you might notice that they sound really stressed and sad, and that maybe they don't want to go to a museum. They just want to go to the pub and have a drink.

Or maybe they mention, because you're on the phone. Actually, we can go to the museum then, but I can only stay two hours because I have to do something very stressful in the evening. And then because you know that, you go to the place with different expectations than before.

This really made me think a lot because texting became normal at quite a young age for me, and I feel like people of my age and younger often say that, 'Oh, we hate phone calls. Phone calls are so stressful. Never call me. Phone calls make me anxious.'

But it really does make things more difficult if you're just texting, and it removes a lot of the emotions. And that example I gave of trying to organise things with someone – if someone takes a day or two to reply, or even like five hours, and you have to send ten messages, it can take like a week to organise a small meetup.

And then at that point, it's just a lot of work, you know? And then if there's a misunderstanding, if someone gets offended, it gets even worse. We lose so much of that emotion and friendliness and subtlety without our voices. Obviously, it's even better if we can see each other in person because then you have body language as well.

And then what often happens is ghosting. You've probably heard of ghosting. Ghosting means when you stop replying to someone, you won't answer their texts and you won't answer their calls. You essentially act like they don't exist. In a technological sense, of course, ghosting is possible because we mainly communicate by text these days, but also because we have such a broad society.

We can use technology to stay in touch with so many people that often these friends are people that we won't naturally see each other in person. Obviously, if you know you're going to see someone at your local church or at university, you can't ghost them because then they'll see you and they'll want to talk to you. But nowadays we tend to have very wide social networks, so it's much easier to ghost people.

Ghosting is complicated. I don't like it. I have been ghosted a lot and I have ghosted other people and I feel bad about it. And actually there have been times where I've gone back and apologised to someone like years later for ghosting them or whatever. But the thing is, once that cycle starts of taking a long time to reply, it's very difficult to break that.

And again, in *Conflict is Not Abuse*, the author, Sarah Schulman, talks about how if someone stops replying to texts, and then you keep texting them, how many texts are you allowed to send before the person thinks you're pushy, or rude, or invading their privacy? And then if you call them, people often think that's aggressive.

We've put up these walls of communication. People will say things like, don't call me, just email me, because if they only communicate through text, they have more control over the situation. And there's many more people now who say, don't contact me anymore, stop contacting me.

And okay, there are times where it's very necessary to break contact with someone because they've hurt you, but realistically, if we ever want to have any resolution, if we want to be able to solve conflict in our relationships and our communities, we have to be willing to sit down and talk with people.

And many situations can get very aggressive and hateful through text or email, but if you just had one voice conversation with them, it would probably be a lot better. So yeah, this – really I've changed my thoughts a lot about this, but it's really difficult because, you know, I know that a lot of my friends, if I call them randomly, they're going to get annoyed.

And so I feel like I want to live in this technological world that's different. I'm swimming against the current. Uh, the current is the force in water that pulls you in a certain way. So rivers flow in one direction. And if you try and swim in a river where the current is strong, you will be pulled in the direction of the current.

I sometimes really feel like I'm swimming against the current in our society because I try to use my phone as little as possible. I keep it in a separate room or in a drawer, or I hide it when I'm working. I basically never use my phone if I'm in a conversation with someone in real life. And if I do use my phone, I always say, 'Oh, I'm sorry, I just need to check something', or 'I'm just going to write that down' so that they know why I'm using my phone.

And yeah, I guess I wish I could call people more and that people could call me. Recently, I've been having this fantasy about getting a landline phone. So most people now just have mobile phones, but in the past, everyone had landline phones. So landline phones are phones that are connected to your place of living. They live in your house, and people call your house.

I have really strong memories of using landline phones growing up. I can remember exactly how our landline phones looked, how they felt. We had this phone in the kitchen with these lovely buttons for speed dial, so you could save certain phone numbers and then just press this one button and it would call that number.

I remember the lovely cord, the cable that connected the phone receiver to the phone on the wall. So this cable was like spiral, like it went in a circle. So you could sit on the phone and then curl the cable around your finger, like, twist the cable around your finger, play with the cable.

It was really nice. And it became a thing of, oh, okay, well, I'm on the phone, so I'm going to sit down in the kitchen. This is the place where phone conversations happen. And I remember my mum would have these long phone conversations where she would play with the cord and also doodle on some paper.

Doodling is when you draw but you're not trying to draw seriously, you're just kind of playing. And she used to doodle actually quite good pictures, very nice pictures of like ballerinas and stuff. And I don't know, I just have fond memories of that. Fond memories means very nice, warm memories.

Calling someone on a smartphone just isn't comfortable in the same way and it's not linked to one location that allows it to be a special activity. So yeah, sometimes I fantasise about getting a really nice comfortable armchair and getting a nice old landline phone and putting it next to the armchair.

But let's be real. Who's going to call me on a landline phone? I would have to really push and pester and bother my friends to get them to call me on a landline phone. And I'd probably get a lot of spam calls. I'd get a lot of calls from companies trying to sell me things, right?

Anyway, this episode has been pretty negative, but it's not all doom and gloom. Doom and gloom is when everything is sad and miserable and crap, but it's not all doom and gloom. I am having a good time living my life in London. I read something recently, I read an article that said if you want other people to enjoy spending time with you, you have to enjoy spending time with yourself.

People who spend time with themselves and like spending time with themselves, being alone – you can feel like a warm energy from them because they like themselves and they're comfortable and I'm good at this. I love myself and I love taking myself out on little dates. I love just walking around and exploring London, going to get bubble tea by myself, taking myself to the theatre and the cinema.

And also, I've just been spending more time just doing things slowly, like, you don't always have to be listening to a podcast, or the radio, or, you know, doing two things at once. I can just slowly fold my laundry and look out the window, or I can darn my socks.

I've been darning my socks lately. You've probably never heard about darning because it's very rare these days. Darning is like when you fix clothes, but specifically it's usually socks. And darning is when you basically, you have a hole in your sock, let's say, and you sew over the hole many times with a thick thread, to fix the hole. So yeah, I've started darning my socks and I also journal every day. I write in my diary every day and I've been reading a lot.

And as I'm saying all this, I really sound like an old man. I just want to sit it home, darn my socks and have nice people call me on the telephone. But it's true! I really do feel like an old soul in a young body. I'm swimming against the current, but you know what? I think that's good. I think it's good to swim against the current.

So yeah, what about you? I would love to hear your thoughts on this episode, on these topics. Do you try to swim against the current? Did you find friendship and love difficult in your 30s? Send me an email at [Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](mailto:Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com) and let me know.

And I will say, I said before that my New Year's resolution was to check my emails more consistently, and I have been doing it. I just recently cleared out my email inbox. That means I answered all my emails. So again, I'm not gonna promise to reply quickly, but I will reply to your email if you send one to me. As long as it's nice. If you send a mean email, I might not reply!

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