



The subject of friendship has inspired many artists, poets, novelists, and filmmakers and is considered fundamental to most people's happiness and fulfilment in life. Recognizing the importance of such a shared spirit of human solidarity, UNESCO's proposal to observe a special day dedicated to friendship was taken up by the UN General Assembly in 1997. The [International Day of Friendship](#), celebrated every year on 30 July, was proclaimed in 2011 by the UN General Assembly with the idea that friendship between peoples, countries, cultures and individuals can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities.

In an ever more globalised world where people from all corners of the planet interact with each other, friendship plays a pivotal role in the advancement of mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity. Befriending someone belonging to a different community or cultural background helps us build bridges between peoples and countries. If children and young people, as future leaders, learn to live together in peace and harmony, it will only contribute to international understanding and respect for diversity.

Beyond the positive influence friendship has on a culture of peace and non-violence, friendship also plays a crucial role when it comes to our mental health. A friendly relationship between two

or more people has been proven essential for our general wellbeing and happiness. Building meaningful relationships helps reduce the emotional impact of the challenges we face in life and fasten our recovery when dealing with mental health-related conditions. In Belgium for instance, the [National survey of happiness 2018](#) revealed that 46% of Belgians suffer from loneliness, young adults between 20 and 34 being the most affected. Loneliness can have disastrous consequences on both our mental and physical health, increasing the chances of suffering from depression.

Celebrating friendship does not only help us tackle the many challenges, crises and forces of division our world currently faces, it also underlines the importance of accumulating bonds of camaraderie and developing strong ties of trust for our mental health and wellbeing.