



There's
nothing I
value more
than the
closeness
of friends
and family.

There are as many ways to be close as there are persons interested in closeness. There are as many ways to be friends as there are people desirous of friendship. With some friends, we choose them to be our family.

With some family, we choose them to be our friends.

Family who become friends see our history as hope for our future. Friends know our past from the stories they have been told; family know our past from events they have lived. Both hold a different mirror to the tales we tell. With direct knowledge of what has shaped us, family knows what challenges we may need to overcome to live into our dreams. They can encourage us by upholding the gifts that they know we will bring into our tomorrows.

Family who become friends love us with the time horizon of forever. Friends offer their friendship with the hope of ongoing connection; family offer their bonds with more certainty of life-long affiliation. With decades of meeting points ahead, family puts relational ebbs and flows in perspective. Since no single encounter defines our shared intimacy we are free to be genuine, to practice honesty. Countless celebrations and conversations strengthen the web of love in all of its many moods.

Family who become friends teach us how to honor ourselves. They know us, they like us and they respect us. They will remind us of how we are endearing and decent. The esteem of family is grounded in memory. Their view has the power to shape how we value ourselves. Our self-image bears the *mark* of their knowing affection.

Few blessings are more sweet.

What friends bring deep joy in my life? How will I share my gratitude for a family member who I consider a friend?

Willie Stargell
(1940 - 2001)
Baseball Player