



Nancy Loesch is extremely grateful for her friend Andrea Beckert, whom she's known since she was 14, and helped her get through chemo treatments



Lindsey Porter and Emily Kimmich, both freshmen at Taylor High School, have been best friends for 10 years





Best Girlfriends

Katy besties speak from the heart
about what keeps them close

*Written by Gail G. Collins
Photography by Sara Isola*

Some relationships are for a season, and others, for reasons no one can explain, last for a lifetime. These Katy-area best friends arrange to see each other regularly but also have to contend with moves, motherhood, illness, and more. Through it all, their bonds grow stronger as their history grows longer.



Jessica Sarbia has been best friends with Jessica Zamora since they were 12 and is also the godmother of her three children



Nancy Sabino met Julissa Bittle in high school when she began dating her older brother and their oldest children are only 10 days apart

Partners in Crime

When Emily Kimmich was in first grade she found herself in the hall for misbehaving at school. Soon, she had company. The other girl in timeout was Lindsey Porter. "What are you out here for?" Emily asked. "Talking," Lindsey said. "Me, too," confided Emily. Soon, the hallway was filled with the stifled giggles of two little girls who couldn't stop talking.

Now, 10 years later, Emily says, "We've been partners in crime ever since." In fact, the two are convinced that there is an advisory stamp on their permanent records keeping them apart. It might be true, because in spite of the fact that they both attend Taylor High School and have similar schedules, they haven't yet had a single class or even the same lunch hour together.

The two are like sisters, and their biggest connection is music. "We go to concerts together regularly," Emily says. Like many friends, they create special time to hang out. Emily and Lindsey schedule sleepovers and stay up talking until dawn. "People even ask us if we're twins," remarks Emily. Next year, the two are founding a club together to spread awareness about mental illness.

Friends, Sisters, and Moms Together

Many significant friendships start in high school, as with Julissa Bittle, who coincidentally was named for her mother's best friend. When Julissa's brother brought a girl named Nancy Sabino home to meet their parents, a close friendship began to form. Their friendship became family when Julissa's brother married Nancy. Julissa jokes with her brother, "God forbid anything happens between the two of you, because I'd pick her."

After Julissa got married, the friends found themselves pregnant around the same time and gave birth 10 days apart. Nancy and Julissa also had their second babies within months of each other. "I wouldn't know how to be pregnant alone," Julissa says. "Being pregnant together made us less crazy for our poor husbands." The friends now constantly compare parenting notes.

Nancy and Julissa also work for the same company, but even though they are connected by marriage and jobs, the two still schedule regular girls' movie nights together. The pick? "Something our husbands' refuse to watch," Julissa laughs. They have stayed close through the years because, according to Julissa, "We are honest with one another. Nancy helps me to see the good in myself. She is my shoulder to lean on and my laughing buddy when I just need a smile."

We Just Clicked

Nancy Loesch met her best girlfriend, Andrea Beckert, when she was 14 years old. "She lived three doors down, and we just clicked," Nancy says. Their families became friends, too. A few years later, Andrea had a child and moved away with her husband. Nancy and Andrea stayed connected through the timeless girlfriend tradition of long talks on the phone.

For over 20 years, whenever the gals needed support, all they had to do was call. Even though they have husbands to confide in, and even though they were separated by distance, Nancy says, "We still call each other - she's my bestie." When

Andrea and her husband moved back, they rented the same house her family had previously owned, and once again lived just down the street.

When Nancy's mother and father died, Andrea was there. Then, Nancy received a cancer diagnosis. "Andrea took me to chemo every Monday," Nancy says. "She's been with me through everything." The secret to staying close? "It just works," she remarks. "We'll always be friends - we have too much history."

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-Nancy Sabino

Support Through It All

Jessica Zamora met Jessica Sarabia in middle school. Besides sharing names, the two Jessicas have birthdays a month apart. Soon after they became close, Sarabia moved away, but when she moved back three years later, the friends picked up right where they had left off.

Sarabia has seen her friend through troubles. "I have other friends, too, but she is always there," Zamora says. When Zamora's father was killed in a car accident, her girlfriend supported her. Three years ago, when Zamora was in the hospital for a week, Sarabia was the one who was there for her. "Jessica came and stayed every night with me so my husband could go home and take care of our children," she says. "She is such a caring person, putting others before herself. I love her dearly."

The Jessicas make it a point to catch up at least once a week. The gals also have a standing date for the rodeo each year. Sarabia is godmother to Zamora's three children, so she attends countless birthday parties and other events. "She is my friend, but she's really my sister," Zamora says. **KM**



GAIL G. COLLINS has three brothers, but she values her gal pals as sisters she chose for life.