

# Friends, not grades, bring fulfilment

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In a bit of happy news for kids headed back to school, compelling new evidence suggests the path to fulfilment isn't paved with straight A's.

Although personal goal-setting and achievement can feel like the alpha and omega of education -and life in general -a forthcoming study in the journal *Self and Identity* finds our most meaningful moments are those that involve social relationships.

The research runs counter to North Americans' narcissistic tendency to seek meaning in a mirror as opposed to a window.

" We live in a very individualistic society where the emphasis is on personal achievement and being different from others and finding your own place," says Shira Gabriel, associate professor of psychology at the University at Buffalo. "That leads us to think that those accomplishments are more important in life than they necessarily are.

"We're not arguing that relationships are inherently better than individual events, because they also bring about more pain in our lives. But what we are saying is that they tend to be more impactful and meaningful to us over time."

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