

# The Positive Power of Friendship



Valerie Harper with Iva March Rifkin (left), and Nicole Barth (right).

There are few more comforting ways to end a hard day than in the company of a best friend. Perhaps over dinner you tell a funny story about your boss, mate or child, and your friend, listening intently, exclaims, "I know just what you mean!" That moment of understanding and connection can be magical.

What defines a best friend? What makes women's relationships so precious? FAMILY CIRCLE posed these questions to four notable women: actress Valerie Harper, 62; businesswoman Ivana Trump, 53; television journalist Meredith Vieira, 49; and model Niki Taylor, 27. Their thoughts on friendship and its rewards will make you smile.

## Valerie Harper: Four Times Blessed

First introduced to TV audiences as Rhoda Morgenstern on the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, Valerie Harper later starred in *Rhoda*. A true-blue friend on TV, she depends in real life on a "quartet" of best friends: dancer-choreographer Nicole Barth, former dancer Iva March Rifkin, actress and acting coach Arlene Golonka and former dancer Penny Almog.

"It's impossible to name one best friend," she says, laughing, "because I've known all four for more than forty years." Now touring in *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, Harper is also the author of *Today I Am a Ma'am* (Cliff Street). "It's a book about friendship and my girlfriends who are no longer girls, though we're still best friends."

Harper and Nicole Barth, for example, have been friends for 43 years. "A bunch of adjectives jump into my mind when I think of Valerie," says Barth, "but number one is that she's reliable. She's there no matter what—a very steady, very humorous force. When you're with her, you're in a safe comfort zone. You're standing with a rock."

**Valerie:** "I think there has always been a profound natural bond between women—a sisterhood from the cave days when we picked berries together to the quilting bees of to-

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