
What "Friends" Have Taught Me

Phoebe Buffay taught me that happiness is a choice

She grew up with the most traumatically “colorful” childhood stories and lived through the saddest situations. She lost her mother to suicide, lived on the streets of the city, got left by her scientist boyfriend several times for Minsk, discovered that her biological mother isn’t who she actually is, became the surrogate mother of her brother’s triplets (and she had to give those babies away of course), broke up with the love of her life and failed at multiple short-term relationships until she was 30 years old.

Ironically, though, Phoebe Buffay happens to be the quirkiest and bubbliest in the bunch. She is almost never depressed, and even when she is, she still knows how to positively affect the people around her. Her songs, though incredibly absurd, give the lightest and happiest feelings; even the audience beyond the TV screen just can’t get enough of “Smelly Cat.” She made me realize that happiness, no matter what the situation is, is achievable.

Joey Tribbiani taught me that rejection is nothing but a phase

Joey Tribbiani is the ultimate chick-magnet. With his good looks, charming personality and that killer “How you doin?” line, he is almost never rejected by girls. However, Joey is also the ultimate struggling actor. For such a long time, he has been living off Chandler’s paycheck and Monica’s refrigerator. He has gone to countless auditions and failed, and has been given countless bad reviews for his performances. He got fired from the best role he has ever landed, too. But what I love about Joey is that he never gave up on his acting dreams. He went from audition to audition, from review to review, without any hope lost. He continued until he was there for good, and he just kept going.

Monica Geller taught me that even the best people can’t achieve perfection

We all know Monica Geller as the obsessive-compulsive-perfectionist-control-freak-organizing-nagger. We know how intense she can get with competition, and how she reminds us of every overly critical person in our life. She settles for nothing but the best, and expects nothing but the best. She wants everything perfectly clean, organized, and labeled. That does not just go for the things in her house — it goes for everything in her life. Even with that fighting spirit and that determination, however, there are some things that did not go according to her plans. She couldn’t give birth to a baby of her own, she failed to settle down with Richard (but okay, she got Chandler woohoo!!!), she has constantly struggled just to keep people (like Rachel and Ross) from “stealing her thunder” from time to time, and even with her amazing cooking skills, she still had to deal with bad restaurant reviews. If Monica’s no-nonsense attitude can’t get her perfection, then it’s time to accept that there are some things in our lives that we have no control over. That’s a reality for everyone, even for the perfect perfectionist, Monica.

Chandler Bing taught me that falling in love with your best friend COULD BE the best thing in life

Chandler, for so long, has struggled with women. He was socially awkward, and he made the weirdest and most uncalled for jokes whenever he felt uncomfortable. He used humor as a defense mechanism — or so he claimed. He's been stuck with the most ridiculously annoying "girlfriend" (OH... MY... GOD.) and has been in the same boring job for years. But being with Monica, his next door neighbor and best friend, has changed all that. (Well, except his humor... but you get the point.) He got over his commitment issues, proposed to the love of his life, got married to a beautiful woman, quit his job for a new career that he obviously loves, adopted children with Monica, bought a house and basically just lived an awesome life after that. Monica brought out the best in him and he did the same with her. It's the kind of relationship everyone wants. It's possible in TV shows, and it sure is possible in real life.

Rachel Green taught me that my life is what I make it

From a rich spoiled brat who knows nothing about love and life, Rachel Green has blossomed into an empowered career woman with so much drive and passion for her field and for the important people in her life. She moved to New York City after she ran away from her own wedding, moved into an apartment building way beyond her comfort zone, spent the next ten years of her life with the best friends she could ever have, got the job of her dreams, and had a beautiful baby girl with the love of her life — things that never could've happened if she hadn't decided to change and put matters into her own hands. Walking away from her privileged life where her decisions were made for her was nearly impossible to do, but she did it. It was her choice to become this new person, and if she could do it, despite everything, I can, too.

Ross Geller taught me that you never give up on true love

How many people have gone through three marriages and three divorces? Even for a fictional character, that is too much. He married a woman who later turned out to be gay, fell head over heels infatuated with some British girl, married her in London (but said Rachel's name instead of hers), and then got drunkenly crazy one night and married Rachel in Las Vegas. We all know him as the man who loooves weddings and proposals and it has been a recurring joke throughout the series. But behind all that funny stuff, we do know one thing: Ross Geller is hopelessly, truly in love with Rachel Green. He was in love with her in high school, he was in love with her in college, he was in love with her when she came running through those Central Perk double doors in a wedding dress, soaking wet. He was in love with her when they were together, and even when they were apart. He has always been in love with Rachel Green, and even if it took him more than a decade to finally work things out, it was worth it. Because even with all those heartaches and mistakes, Ross Geller never gave up on true love.