

With a Little Help from Our Comadres: Part Two

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Last week we learned that researchers have validated that the strong bonds we have as Latinas in our traditional familias and friendships protect us—and can help us make healthy changes.

This week, I want to share a personal story and una práctica (a practice).

A Balanced Life with Help From Our Comadres

Miriam and I have helped each other through many life changes—including the death of her husband, my divorce, raising our daughters, becoming more prosperous, building our careers, decorating our homes, preventing and managing diabetes and, above all, living a healthy and happy life.



Each year, around the first day of Autumn, we get together and go through a plática process we started over 20 years ago. We make a list of the 7 most important areas of our lives and review our progress and make vows for changes for the following year.

- Personal Relationships
- Aspects of Health and Wellness
- Aspects of Prosperity
- Living Environment
- Career and Work
- Creative Expression
- Care of the Soul

We go through each of the seven areas of our life and take turns speaking with no interruption or cross talk. We just listen to what each has to say and make no comment until the end.

We answer four basic questions for each of the seven areas:

1. What went well?
2. What didn't go so well?

3. What would we like to change?
4. What kind of help do we need from each other?

Using this process has helped the two of us accomplish many things throughout the years. We have improved our careers, become wiser mothers, better partners, more creative writers and artists.

We have made more money and avoided making expensive interior decorating mistakes. We have both become healthier and happier and, oh yeah, we have both lost about 25 pounds each.

Continued Success with a Supportive Friend

Our annual conversation is one of the most valuable and consistent things I have done with my life and my comadre and supportive friend, Miriam, for 20 years. Our friendship has grown and deepened. We are in our 60s now, and it is fair to say that we are more fulfilled and happy as a result of this bond that is based on listening to each other, tracking each other and caring for each other's happiness.

In the area of health and wellness, Miriam and I have made great progress. We have used this method for achieving a healthier, more balanced life.

This year, I shared with Miriam that one aspect of health and wellness that went very well for me last year was biking. (I bike six miles a day!) She smiled without comment. Just seeing her face made me proud of myself.

When I shared aspects that didn't go so well, I shared that my arms felt like mush. Again, no judgment from her. Just a nod that she was hearing me.

When I got to Question Three—what I would like to change—I told her that I needed to keep up my arm strength, that I wanted to be a strong old lady, one who can pick up her own suitcase and put it in the overhead compartment. She still looked at me wisely and smiled.

And when we got to Question Four, Mir asked, "How can I help?"

After thinking a bit, I said, "I guess I need some suggestions, since I really detest going to the gym to lift weights."

That is when Miriam finally spoke to give me advice. She said, "First of all, you don't have to go to the gym if you don't like it." She then suggested that I get some exercise bands and told me about a YouTube video she used when she started doing arm-strengthening exercises. Knowing me and my love of television, Miriam even suggested I keep some bands by the couch! I vowed to try it twice this week just to see how it would go.

She gave me a high five and asked, "Do you want to check in with me next week, and let me know?"

I accepted her offer and told her that I could also just shoot her an email or a text.

I then did the same for her. Her goal was to increase her walking by five minutes a day, three times a week. We went through the same process and vowed to check in and help each other out.

Miriam and I trust each other—we have confianza. Sometimes we admit to each other that we don't want to do what it takes, that we aren't ready for change.

Just admitting that we are struggling helps break down the barriers. Sometimes we are successful and sometimes we aren't, but we are always faithful about helping each other without judgment. We know that each of us only wants the best for the other. We both feel supported and cared for.

Having a comadre, a supportive friend, in your life can help you achieve a healthier, happier life. This plática process is a concrete way to get help from our comadres.

Learn more about how to be a supportive friend in [part three](#).