

**Imagine you are speaking to an old friend from Wellesley who offers what YOU consider to be a poor excuse for not attending reunion. What would you tell her about your Reunion experience to persuade her to attend next time?**

Forget your preconceived expectations -- you will be surprised at how welcoming the campus, the alumnae, the student helpers, and especially our classmates are!!!

Just do it! It is an incredibly warm, uplifting, and inspiring experience. And you will make new friends!

It's not about that - it's about reconnecting and rejuvenating.

Going to reunion helps you realize you are not alone in anything you may be going through or have gone through, from unwanted job changes to personal life crises. The specific situations may not be the same, but the feelings are, and just maybe, someone will say something that will help you through yours. Campus is beautiful--very restorative. Listening to panel discussions, M. Albright.... It's great to THINK and to have your thoughts provoked. Can't wait until the 30th!

Just do it!!! as long as you know one person going it will be spectacular.... and perhaps not even "knowing" anyone going you would find others who arrive like yourself, wondering what to expect and all, but it all works out. I did worry a bit about "not measuring up" or, not fitting in as I felt I did not fit in while I was there! I was surprised to find such kinship and lack of ego/crap... I guess many of us have really grown up and out of some of the roles we had then ( myself included). You might be very pleasantly surprised by how nice it is to be around such a vast crowd of incredible women again!!!! no one is measuring you up, or down, and no one cares about what ever failures you may feel - in fact they are eager to help point out your successes and things that make you unique! I found reunion to be so open and friendly, everyone so eager to just have a good time and laugh, to rekindle old friendships and also start new ones... there was not enough time, really, and the weekend is over before you know it! I found myself doing stuff I thought I would not do ( like bother with step singing), enjoying the parade ( which I feared going to for some strange reason), and even going to our class meeting ( ok, I skipped out early on this one... :) ) seeing and being around other alums from other classes was also a high point and very unexpectedly so! you will leave reunion feeling once again so grateful to have gone to such a wonderful college!!! and they do not press anyone to give back to the college.... it is not a giant fundraising appeal!!! ( though you may, as I did, find yourself suddenly more aware of why you might consider giving to the College!).

Reunion isn't about measuring one of us against another. It's about sharing experiences and celebrating the ways in which we're all the same and different. It's about learning about yourself by seeing yourself through your classmates eyes. EVERYONE thinks they aren't good enough. And then finds they are if they listen carefully! Don't be scared of going. Be scared of NOT going. You're missing so much! As one classmate said, "Claim this place as yours!"

Everyone feels inadequate in some way. Those that don't have kids wished they had a family. Those with families wished they had careers. And those with both feel like they are not doing justice to either. Reunions are about feeling whole and realizing that no one has it all.

First, I would tell her that I would love to see her -- that it's not what she has (or has not) accomplished that makes her important to me. Then I would try to suggest some things that she might enjoy about being back at Wellesley that wouldn't involve her having to deal excessively with the kinds of questions that would put her in a position of feeling that she hadn't accomplished as much. Frankly, however, Reunion is set up in such a way that it's hard to avoid any (not mention many) conversations along this line. This is not to say that Reunion is set up poorly. But it's inevitable that one will be spending a lot of time talking with classmates about one's experiences. Personally I find the experience tiring - lots of short conversations and moving from one activity to the next. I do like seeing people who I knew in college but haven't stayed in touch with, as well as my closer friends who I do stay in touch with. But I'd rather come to campus with a few friends when the atmosphere isn't frenetic with alumnae. Then I could have long talks and walks with them in the beautiful environment of the college. Given my inclinations, I'm not sure that I could convince my old friend to attend.

Reunion is a great time to reconnect with classmates. Everyone is anxious to "catch up" - not "one up" each other. It's a fun, supportive weekend that should not be missed!

Reunion was more about reconnecting with old friends and sharing experiences than comparing success stories. I honestly spent more time talking about challenges in our lives than about successes.

The people who attended were much more down to earth than you might expect, given how wound up some of us were as undergrads. But 25 years of life makes a big difference!

I would say exactly what I found myself thinking about such people: reunion is an opportunity to have the experiences, connections and memories you may have missed during your years at Wellesley. Put another way, it is a second (or third or fourth...) chance to learn, share, teach, lead, follow, admire, inspire or just "be" a Wellesley woman.

We're past competing anymore, at least that's how it seems to me. We've all been alive long enough to have done interesting things and everyone expects that they'll be meeting some classmates for the first time. Yes, the fundraising competition between the classes is intense, but no one knows whether or not any one individual has participated, and no one is asking either. It's fascinating to see a fundraising machine like that in action, and I always bring back ideas for other organizations I work with. Reunion is intellectually nourishing and a great reality check. Yes, we do still look pretty good, and we're active, and we're taking on all sorts of

challenges. It makes me feel more normal, less unique, and at the same time extraordinary.

Reunions give you a chance to develop new friendships and make new professional contacts outside of the friendship connections you had when you were in college. You aren't your 20-year-old insecure self, anymore. This is a chance to start afresh!

Lots of people had lots of experiences, I have talked to many people at reunion who have had difficulties and it felt good to compare notes. As far as donations, the focus is on percent participation not amount--even if you give \$ 10 you are counting towards % participation.

I think I would try to persuade her to come for those she knows but also for the support and friendship of those classmates she may not have known well during her career. The sharing of challenges and the support of classmates who I did not necessarily know well at all during college years was really a great part of the reunion experience, and reunion gives everyone a chance to make new connections, not just renew old ones. I would also say that Wellesley belongs to all of us who attended, regardless of whether we give money, or what choices we have made in living our lives. And finally, the beauty of the campus is still so overwhelming, that it is worth it to come back just to experience that once again!

You are a part of Wellesley. All I felt was a warm embrace from all the women of our class. We are one group. All of Wellesley feels like family. I don't feel like I have met expectations, or that I am doing anything 'grand' either. Coming together, sharing our experiences, memories, and ideas is so rich. This is the second reunion I have attended. I never want to miss another one! If you want, we can room together and go to events together. You will find, however, that you will remember a lot of faces and you will feel a connectedness. You will also probably meet new friends, women you didn't get to know when you were a student.

Especially at this reunion, it was striking how many different paths people have taken - and enough years have passed where we have probably ALL experienced the unexpected course corrections that have challenged whatever we thought Wellesley's "expectations" might have been. It was fun talking to, hanging out with, and dancing with people I didn't know while I attended Wellesley, women who have had all types of experiences over the past 25 years. And nobody knows or cares who has or has not given money to the college. So this isn't an outstanding sound bite, but I would highly recommend Reunion to any classmates!

The range of experience, personal and professional, was enormous! You always meet new people that surprise you and that you didn't know. One final note: I wish there some "stats" on the class of 1984, which might settle these questions, perhaps an anon survey in advance: I wondered about the people in my class: how many people single, divorced, married. How many people have been fired at least once, had miscarriages, had children, moved more than 100 miles, had children with learning issues or parents who are ill. How many people started advance degrees, how many finished, how many live in the NE, how many in SW, how many people had cancer, how many are worth more than 500K or more than 1 million etc. How many attended a play or orchestral concert in the last 10 months, how many traveled abroad, how many go to a church, how many live in suburbs, are engaged in the community and in

what way. We are told we are "amazing" but are we different than any other collection of women or even of college educated women? I know stats can be reductive but I think it would be very interesting. I felt this year there were a lot of women at reunion who were very involved, as I am, in being moms (I did not feel this at the 20th) and I wondered if it was because of our age, the age of our child, our financial stability, etc. Overall reunion was great and I will go again. My husband and kids (16, 14, 5) LOVED it and we were all so impressed. Shakespeare house was the only place that looked a little down in the dumps, everything else looked wonderful and thoughtful and perfect. Thanks for a great time.

One of my friends who has also dropped off the career track commented about how there was no bragging. Everyone respected and appreciated the decisions and choices we have all made. We truly embodied the real meaning of the women's movement and what we learned at Wellesley. We all have the ability to make choices about our lives and we use our Wellesley education and other life experiences to make our contributions in whatever way we can. I have a friend who each year comes to reunion only because I drag her there. Without fail, each year she is more into it than I am -- finds new connections and is glad she came.

You see people you didn't know well at school and love getting to know them. The College doesn't care who gives money but you might feel more inclined after visiting. We really didn't appreciate the campus as kids. Everyone's life takes different turns and the people who appeared to have the most on the ball have the furthest to fall. I love coming even when it's awkward and I don't feel like I know someone because invariably someone shows up that I do know and haven't seen in ages. It's so impressive the education that we received, it's great to come back and really appreciate it.

None of my college friends went, but I immediately met some previously unknown classmates to hang out with over the weekend. Nobody (and I mean nobody) cares whether you think you're successful or not, because they'll think you're fine -- you're bound to meet classmates who just got dumped, cheated on, divorced, laid off, just got a shattering diagnosis. And those are the "successful" ones! No matter what, you'll fit in much better than you think you did in college. And when else in your life are you ever in a room with 50 intelligent women the same age as you?

It would be easier to go with a friend. The only reason I went was because a friend dragged me there and I end up having a good time. Also, no one was nagging me to donate.

I face this all the time with friends... I live locally, so it's easy to come (even with excuses), but those who have to travel (and who make up excuses) are a tough bunch to convince... I think a (somewhat aggressive / persistent) friend-to-friend campaign would help... i.e. -- friends who are going should rally all their friends to go, etc. There are also ways to make people feel like "so and so" can't wait to see you again (which makes it about "PEOPLE" not accomplishments)...etc. I am one of those "not yet married" people, and have had ups and downs in my career (at least within the past 6 yrs), but I was struck by how honest and open people were about their career and family highs and lows. It was refreshing and I left reunion feeling extremely proud and motivated (this reunion exceeded expectations, for me). I have

already told friends how much we missed them at reunion, how inspiring it was, and how "real" people were, etc. Plus, I sent photos! ;-)

SZR P.S. My only complaint was Step Singing (I think it's time for a new, vivacious leader) and the cost of some of the meals (i.e. Friday night's meal was really expensive and I would have preferred to pay less, and not have alcohol, or something).

I would tell her that Reunion is a clean slate. Most people are interested in meeting new people and genuinely interested in sharing with their sisters. The past, outside of traditions, is irrelevant.

It's an opportunity to reflect on what you gained from your time there. It doesn't have to be about anyone else. Having time to yourself to walk around and greet folks from other classes and think is important too.

Pshaw!! No one is measuring income, number of kids, number of jobs, number of husbands! Come see your friends and make some new ones!

Perhaps this is a function of maturity, but I noticed folks mixing and mingling with people they had not known well while attending Wellesley, which was a refreshing change from past reunions. My response would be truthful in that I also did not 'fit' at Wellesley in the traditional way, both as a student and in the years since, yet have overcome those personal hesitations, if you will, and now view my differences as a positive -- we would be really dull if we were all alike.

No matter where you are in your life's journey, you will find classmates and other alums with whom you share something in common. My experience has been that reunion is a wonderful time for connecting and reconnecting, sharing and celebrating, not about judging.

I talked to many classmates who I didn't know at Wellesley, and appreciated getting to know them now. There is no pressure around success, everyone has their own story to tell.

It's a chance to just celebrate the diversity of women and paths that come through Wellesley; there was absolutely no pressure about giving; it was so fun to be back on campus again; really fun to see old classmates I had forgotten about; by the 25th reunion, everyone's had their highs and lows, fast tracks and off tracks -- a lot of us seem to be re-assessing what we want and who we are, and what we want to do with the next half of our lives, so it's as much about what is to be as what has been. Rather than being a judgmental atmosphere, it's incredibly supportive.

Everyone is accepted, it seems that you make friends with people you didn't even know well at school or wanted to get to know but were too shy!

In land navigation, it's possible to determine one's position in the wilderness by using a compass to shoot an azimuth to two known points, plotting the angles on a map, and determining the point of intersection. Wellesley reunions attract me for the same reason living abroad and switching work environments every few years attract me: the change of vista forces me to shoot azimuths to determine where I am. Not a competition with others, reunion provides a means for gaining self-awareness, to catch glimpses of myself as others see me, a

way to self-gratify in one of the prettiest places on earth. Attending reunion is thrilling because the collective intelligence and drive of my classmates exude an energy that's palpable. And it's fun. That's what I'd tell her.

Just go. My mother told me years ago of a classmate who found herself on welfare having been abandoned by her husband and fired from her job. By no stretch of the imagination did this woman feel "successful" (at least not at that reunion) but her courage was inspiring to others and she later shared how grateful she was for the non-judgmental support. I have met women at every reunion who I never knew before and several have become dear friends. The campus is beautiful, the traditions are goofy, the people are fabulous and the conversations as vital as ever. Go.

Just go. It's fun. Everybody has a story. There are Wellesley grads who represent every possible variation of post-college experience.

I felt the same way before this and other reunions. And every time I went, I was glad I did. If anywhere is completely accepting, it is Wellesley. It was important for me to recharge the Wellesley part of myself and reaffirm all the things I consider important. Reunion does that for you.

It was easy to pick and choose events to attend, and I spent most of the time hanging out with a few friends, which was great.

By our age, everyone is over the latest and greatest achievements. We've all had significant bumps along the road, and life has taken many unexpected turns. It's wonderful to share these experiences.

I would tell her about a discussion a number of us had on Sunday afternoon as we were all beginning to think about heading home. Some of those at our table had not planned on attending Reunion, but were persuaded by other classmates to come. All of those who were on the fence about attending spoke unequivocally about how glad they were to have attended. How, despite tough times (some had lost jobs, husbands, didn't feel particularly successful this year, weren't able to contribute to the College as they might have wished) they felt bolstered by being among their classmates - women of the same generation - some of whom were going through many of the same experiences and who understood and were glad to be supportive. I believe that many left that discussion Sunday afternoon with a renewed sense of self-worth.

It is part of our history and it's always there for us to return to (whether our experience before, during or after college was what we hoped for). What makes Wellesley truly unique is the alumnae - and there is no better way to reconnect with this fabulous group of women than at reunion.

I would tell her all of her excuses (except the last) were also true of my situation and I had a really good time.

Just come--no one judges.

What I said in the previous point. Primarily, everyone has had struggles to become who they are. No one is the perfect Wellesley woman. We have all had to compromise with our dreams, and finding out who each of us has become is the most inspiring part of the process. Plus, the obvious of reconnecting with friends and people I admired whom I have not seen for 25 years! One of the amazing aspects of reunion is hearing what people thought of me 25 years ago, and all the positive feedback I received on who I was then and now. I had the same feedback for many of my friends/acquaintances, and that interaction was extremely positive for my ego - we can all use some of that boosting!

I would tell her that one of the best parts of reunion is making new friends and finding out that no matter what your situation is there are others going through the same thing - for example, in transition, looking for work, taking care of parents, being single, etc. Giving money makes no difference because your classmates don't know whether or not you have given anything.

You will be surprised to learn how many classmates are not living the "perfect" life, it's fun to reconnect with people even if you haven't kept in touch at all since graduation. You might get some good advice and make some connections to help you in your career. The college is a great resource, you should take advantage of it.

I will summarize what I did tell a friend who did not attend reunion, albeit with a good reason. At the heart of the matter we are all just living our lives. I had to learn early on that I would never be able to compete with some of my classmates. They have had too great a head start. But, the point is not to compete-- the point is to connect. I find someone new or something new at every reunion. And, quoting the speaker at the Alumnae Association Business Meeting, I am part of the largest and most effective women's network in the world. That fact alone is worth taking the time out to attend some part of reunion.

Come and have fun. All of us have had challenges of one sort or another. Reunion is a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with friends and classmates and build strength and perspective from these relationships.

I was worried about coming because a lot in my life has not gone well -but honestly it didn't matter. I had so much fun and spent a lot of time talking with people I hadn't even seen since college. Everyone seemed very relaxed about life - I guess we've all had a lot happen to us since graduation so we're a little wiser now. I wouldn't miss the next one for anything.

I know way more people NOW than I did when attending Wellesley because I've COME to so many reunions. It's never too old to make new friends. I don't feel like any one judged me for anything.

I would tell her about how great it was to reconnect with people who had done all sorts of things with their lives; that it wasn't about judging, it was about reconnecting, and that as women who shared the Wellesley experience, it was good to reconnect.

Reunion is a celebration of womanhood and a chance to network, enjoy the campus, eat dorm food, appreciate having your own shower, spend time finding peace on our beautiful campus.

Making peace with the past. Finding new friends in the class and with other alumni years. These reluctance to attend reunion is not unique to Wellesley - I see it at my graduate school, my husband's college etc. These nonattenders are usually removed from alumni activities - and so they do not feel close to the college. One way to bring them closer to the class is to bring them closer to the college -- that means the college needs to reach out and make these alums feel valued and respected. i.e. by getting their news the notes, reaching out to them with alumni events in their geographic area, that are sponsored by the college, not just the clubs (which can be cliquish). etc etc. Perhaps our class can set up an informal task force on this and test a few ideas. We had few classmates of color. Perhaps we need to investigate that topic separately.

Claim your College!! There is room for all experiences positive and negative from your college days Attend the panel discussions about real issues that we are concerned with now-transitions, aging parents, special needs children, job loss, health issues, economic downsizing No one is judging you!!

We are an incredibly diverse group of women and I guarantee you will connect with someone who has similar experiences to yours.

I find myself not only connecting with those friends that I was close to but also with those classmates who may just have a familiar face and now we have some life experiences in common. I would also say that it's a wonderful time to just enjoy being at Wellesley and perhaps explore some of those activities/facilities that we did not have the opportunity to do while we were here (e.g., boating, Keohane Sports Center, astronomy lab, ...)

Wellesley welcomes every alumna with open arms -- every woman at reunion has her own special story filled with twists and turns of every kind. How often do you get the chance to be surrounded by sisterhood?

None of that matters - most people who return feel the same way. Reunion is emotionally evocative - sometimes of good and bad - but it gives you a better perspective on what those four years meant and how they formed you. There is a sense of "closure" and better appreciation that can be achieved by returning. And it is fun, the old alumnae are truly inspiring, the campus is breathtaking, and the faculty talks and special speakers are very engaging. No question on how to improve? I was disappointed with the shortened parade route this year. Also, do not like spouses/kids marching in the parade - we are there to celebrate the alumnae! Spouses and kids should be on sidelines cheering as well. Did not like the use of the buses for the older alums - could not see the women. Also, missed having one meal event where everyone is together under one roof/tent.

All these things no longer matter. You are who you are. You are now 47. If you were going to be CEO, you'd be CEO by now. Those games of comparison have finished at this point in life. Plus, it's a great party and totally fun. People are very nice.

People you know will be there. people you didn't know but should have will be there. everybody has fun. it's really nice to take a weekend away.

All those excuses are based on you comparing yourself with the ideals that we all projected when we graduated. Of course Wellesley trained us to expect the highest accomplishments, but you don't need to have achieved any of those things to feel comfortable going to reunion. In fact, the most important thing I accomplished since graduating was that I stopped drinking in 1986. How does that compare with the accomplishments of Madame Chiang Kai Shek, Madeleine Albright, Hillary Clinton, Cokie Roberts, Diane Sawyer, Ali MacGraw, and the like? I am an alum just like they are, and I have just as much right to claim Wellesley as my college. Plus, part of reunion is meeting classmates you never knew in college.

I'd tell her nobody is going to judge you and that she'll have more fun seeing her old buddies than she imagines

1. This time (enough years out?) it seemed like everyone was glad to see everyone. No real cliques. Panels started right off with problems, so there was no facade that we are/were/will always be superwomen. 2. Wellesley is special enough that there must have been at least one something that was positive. Come back for that one thing and I'm sure you'll remember/discover more.

I would tell her that, although I had many of those reservations, I ended up having a really good experience at the reunion. That the experience of interacting with my classmates was really positive, even though I did not know most of them while in school. Also, it is a wonderful campus, and the reunion is a very interesting, positive experience.

I live nearby, so that makes it easy. I can understand that it is harder for people who live further away. I'm glad that classmates take the effort to make a record book so that we can hear about each other. I was really glad that a classmate started a financial aid pool for people who had trouble affording to travel to reunion, but I know of one classmate who still stayed away because of the cost. I hope that the alumnae club could make that a fundraising item in addition to our contribution to the college. As a local, I would happily chip in.

I think all these things were set aside at the reunion - it was like being a freshman again. Even if I had a lot of old friends at the reunion I actually really enjoyed meeting and speaking to classmates that I didn't know during my years at Wellesley.

I do have friends like that. I would have loved for them to come! I think they feel that being unmarried and without kids is embarrassing somehow, and that they haven't measured up to everyone else. Not true! That's not what this is about! The Reunion was a special way to reconnect with special people who appreciated you then and who would still appreciate you now. It was a time to reestablish friendships, go nuts and let yourself be at home in a judgment-free environment. You leave knowing that you are not alone. People come to just reconnect with each other and share life's experiences because, as too many of us already know, life is too short! People shared their experiences in losing parents, divorce, child rearing, career frustrations, dating, and life lessons. It's nice to come with a friend, but that is not a prerequisite!

In past reunions it is true that we talked a lot about how many kids we had or what marriage we made or our great jobs. Now, in our mid-40's, we seem to have become more supportive of one another, less prone to make assumptions or judge, more open to alternative paths. I would tell my classmate that we need her -- that her input is just as valuable as anyone else's, and our story is incomplete without her. It seems we have matured to the point where our narrative is no longer like a Christmas card list of accomplishments but instead is a far more textured and interesting story. This time, at our class panels several classmates confessed to having made poor choices in marriage, and some had divorced; one said she was single but "not by choice"; one said she regretted not having children, and several talked of children with special needs; some said they had lost jobs in the economic crisis. We are talking honestly. As we change, we find new resources in one another for helping us process our life experiences, regardless of what those might be.

People who came to reunion were in all different places in life: some married, some not; some with impressive careers, others unemployed; some came with groups of friends, some came with just one. Some of us are not in a place where we can give lots of money to Wellesley (or any at all) but I did not feel heavy pressure to give and I think there is sufficient maturity and understanding that where you make your charitable contributions is personal. It is OK to have other giving priorities and still enjoy the unique reunion experience. I know there are some who didn't come because they were embarrassed that they had put on weight. While it is true that some people had aged very well, there were plenty who were not going to let this issue keep them from having fun. It is wonderful to reconnect with old friends, powerful to walk the campus again, and it is nice to take the time to reflect on life with former classmates. I also enjoyed meeting new people and hearing their life stories. I do think it would be hard to attend if you do not have one friend going.

I never had kids either. I'm not famous, or wealthy, nor do I have a high-achieving career. But I had fun anyway. Once I decided it wasn't important to me to be validated by the kind of woman who is a class officer or an alumnae association VIP, I had a perfectly good time basking in the companionship of other smart women. Those swanky folks who didn't notice me back in college still don't notice me -- but I no longer care. It was a shame that the other classmates to whom I was particularly close decided not to come this year, since I was looking forward to sitting up too late with a mug of tea and catching up. Sure, there's part of me who thinks that in order to go to reunion I ought to have been pretty and thin and rich -- but I wasn't any of those things when I was an undergraduate either. I liked seeing all the improvements that have been made to the campus (the new religious facilities in the chapel building, the increasing electronicization of the Library, the new student center, the environmental remediation of Paint Shop Pond). I visited the art museum for the first time ever. Savoring the campus was definitely the high point of the trip for me.

I watch those women back for their 50th, 60th, 70th!! and no one cares what they've done - all that matters is that they are there! No one in our class really cares what you've done either, we just want you there and we want to hear your stories, past and present.