

The Power of Connections: Nurturing Relationships for a Happier Life

Relationships provide us with enrichment and fulfillment in a variety of ways. During good times and bad, our connections with others provide us with a network of emotional support. Relationships can help us to alleviate stress and boost our happiness and ultimately become better people. Through our relationships, we often have opportunities for growth and reflection; additionally, we can learn more about ourselves and others and this contributes to our growth as individuals.

Our relationships often allow us to be part of a group or community, this gives us a sense of belonging and purpose. These connections with others remind us that we are not alone, and we have people who care about us. The support and collaboration provided through our relationships can help us to achieve goals that may be challenging to achieve on our own. Through relationships our life has depth, meaning and connection.

Key Elements of Maintaining Healthy Relationships

Relationships can have a positive impact on our mental and physical health. Close connections with others can reduce the risk of depression, anxiety and even improve the health of our hearts. Maintaining relationships takes effort, but it is certainly worth your time and energy to do so.

Let's explore several factors that help us to maintain relationships.

Likely the most crucial component of a healthy relationship is **communication** that is both regular and open. It is important to share your thoughts, feelings and experiences with those you are close with; likewise, it is also important that you actively listen to others when they share these same things with you.

Support is another essential aspect of maintaining relationships. We often think of offering support when people are struggling, but it is also good to offer support when they are doing well. Be there to support others during challenging times but also to celebrate with them!

Trust is vital in relationships and one of the best ways to build and maintain trust is through consistency. When you are consistent in your behaviors and actions, as well as being reliable and dependable, others can develop trust for you.

Spending **quality time** can help to foster closeness and encourage the maintenance of relationships. Quality time can be as simple as having a meaningful conversation but can also be through sharing interests and participating in activities together.

When we express **gratitude and appreciation** for the people in our life, we foster positive relationships. This can be as simple as giving a compliment or even just saying "I appreciate you."

It is important to be **mindful** of one another's boundaries and their needs for personal space. Each person is different so we must be careful to avoid assuming that everyone has the same needs we have for boundaries and personal space. This can also change over the course of a relationship, so it is important to make sure you are checking in with others about their needs as your relationship moves forward.

Conflict is a natural part of most relationships, and many relationships unfortunately end because conflict is not successfully addressed and resolved. Either before or after a conflict has occurred, it can be helpful to talk about each person's perspective and needs during conflict situations, so you are better equipped to navigate it.

No two people have the same experiences or perspectives, as such it is essential to always practice **empathy** in our relationships. Having empathy allows us to understand what others are going through and this helps us to develop a mutual understanding of and a deeper connection with others.

Life gets busy for all of us, but it is important that we try to **stay connected** in our relationships. We can stay connected even with a simple message or a quick phone call to check-in.

Last, but certainly not least, remember to have **fun** in your relationships! Healthy relationships need joy and laughter, make sure you find opportunities to experience happiness with those you care about.

Maintaining healthy and happy relationships takes effort. Take some time to reflect on the current state of your relationships. Most of us have some relationships that would benefit from some "maintenance." What is one way you could use your time and energy to improve a relationship in your life?

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