

Building Healthy Relationships



1. Speak a little less, listen a little more

Most people get tremendous pleasure from speaking about themselves. But, here we have to be careful; if we always speak about our achievements or tribulations, people will get fed up with our egoism.

If we are willing and able to listen to others, we will find it much appreciated by our friends. Some people are not aware of how much they dominate the conversation. If you find you are always talking about yourself, consider the advice of the Greek philosopher, Epictetus:

“Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak.”

2. Which is more important being right or maintaining harmony?

A lot of problems in relationships occur because we want to maintain our personal pride. Don't insist on always having the last word. Healthy relationships are not built through winning meaningless arguments. Be willing to back down; most arguments are not of critical importance anyway.

3. Avoid Gossip

If we value someone's friendship we will not take pleasure in commenting on their frequent failings. They will eventually hear about it. But, whether we get found out or not, we weaken our relationships when we dwell on negative qualities. Avoid gossiping about anybody; subconsciously we don't trust people who have a reputation for gossip. We instinctively trust and value people who don't feel the need to criticise others.

4. Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not just a cliché, it's a powerful and important factor in maintaining healthy relationships. However, real forgiveness also means that we are willing to forget the experience. If we forgive one day, but then a few weeks later bring up the old misdeed, this is not real forgiveness. When we make mistakes, just consider how much we would appreciate others forgiving and forgetting.

5. Know When to Keep Silent

If you think a friend has a bad or unworkable idea, don't always argue against it; just keep silent and let them work things out for themselves. It's a mistake to always feel responsible for their actions. You can offer support to friends, but you can't live their life for them.

6. Right Motive

If you view friendship from the perspective of "what can I get from this?" you are making a big mistake. This kind of relationship proves very tentative. If you make friendships with the hope of some benefit, you will find that people will have a similar attitude to you. This kind of friendship leads to insecurity and jealousy. Furthermore, these fair weather friends will most likely disappear just when you need them most. Don't look upon friends with the perspective "what can I get out of this?". True friendship should be based on mutual support and good will, irrespective of any personal gain.

7. Oneness.

The real secret of healthy relationships is developing a feeling of oneness. This means that you will consider the impact on others of your words and actions. If you have a true feeling of oneness, you will find it difficult to do anything that causes suffering to your friends. When there is a feeling of oneness, your relationships will be free of jealousy and insecurity.

For example, it is a feeling of oneness which enables you to share in the success of your friends. This is much better than harbouring feelings of jealousy. To develop oneness we have to let go of feelings of superiority and inferiority; good relationships should not be based on a judgemental approach. In essence, successful friendship depends on the golden rule: "do unto others as you would have done to yourself." This is the basis of healthy relationships.

8. Humour

Don't take yourself too seriously. Be willing to laugh at yourself and be self-deprecating. This does not mean we have to humiliate ourselves, far from it — it just means we let go of our ego. Humour is often the best antidote for relieving tense situations.

9. Work at Relationships but don't over analyze

Maintaining healthy relationships doesn't mean we have to spend several hours in the psychiatrist's chair. It means we take a little time to consider others, remembering birthdays and anniversaries etc. But, it is a mistake to spend several hours ruminating and dissecting relationships. This makes the whole thing very mental; it's better to forget any negative experiences. Good friendships should be built on spontaneity and newness, sharing a moment of humour can often do more benefit than several hours of discussion.

10. Concern and Detachment

Healthy relationships should be built on a degree of detachment. Here, people often make a mistake; they think that being detached means, "not caring". However, this is not the case. Often when we develop a very strong attachment we expect the person to behave in a certain way. When they don't we feel miserable and try to change them. A good friendship based on detachment means we will always offer good will, but we will not be upset if they wish to go a different way.