

# Relationships

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## Relationship (Webster's Dictionary)

- 1) The state or character of being related or interrelated: CONNECTION.
- 2) KINSHIP; a specific instance or type of kinship.
- 3) a state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings

Webster uses such words as "connection" and "kinship" to define relationships. Think about the relationships in your life. Do you feel a sense of connection and kinship with your friends, siblings, parents, children, mentors, or romantic partner? It is these connections that bring us joy, energy, and love. Through these connections we can also experience anger, jealousy, and resentment. No, relationships aren't always easy and conflict will develop. The future of our relationships is determined by how we work through these conflicts.

## Are You Ready For A Relationship?

- Are you still in love with an ex-partner?
- Are you still carrying resentment/rage toward an ex-partner?
- Do you feel spiritually empty?
- Do you dislike the person you are?
- Do you feel you have nothing valuable to offer a partner?
- Do you have addictions you're not dealing with?
- Do you feel so lonely and desperate that you're totally miserable without a relationship?
- Do you feel no one would want to be in a relationship with you?
- Do you find it difficult to feel any emotion?
- Are you unwilling to talk about your feelings with others?

## Do's and Don'ts of Relationships

### Don't:

- Begin your statements with "you should", "you ought to", "you always" or "you never"
- Re-fight old arguments or re-live old hurts
  - Do everything together
  - Demand change
- Call names, use sarcasm, make accusations

### Do:

- Even when the source of pain seems clearly to be your partner's behavior, try to get in touch with what is going on inside you
- Listen carefully and non-judgmentally to what your partner is saying/feeling
- Make positive suggestions in specific terms about what you'd like to be different in your relationship with your partner
- Practice assessing where your relationship is frequently

# Stages of a Relationship

## **Attraction:**

You are attracted to a person for some reason and want to know her/him better. It could be someone who "looks good" to you; someone you've talked to a few times; someone who appeals to you emotionally or for some other, unexplainable reason.

## **The first step:**

You take the risk of suggesting you do something together- have coffee, go to a lecture or concert together, etc.

## **Getting to know one another:**

You start spending more time together. If it's working so far, you both risk being more vulnerable by disclosing things about yourselves to each other. This stage tests the relationship and builds (or ends) feelings of trust in one another.

## **Conflict:**

Sooner or later, differences arise. It may not seem like it at the time, but conflict is an opportunity. The relationship can stop and stay at this level, die, or grow deeper. The opportunity is that you have a chance to share fully and honestly the conflict you are feeling.

## **Working it out:**

If you resolve the conflict, the relationship grows stronger. You realize you can get through the rough spots. You develop a deeper sense of trust and confidence in each other. If you don't resolve the conflict, the relationship might end, or the conflict will just remain as a "sticking point."

## **Deepening the relationship:**

If the conflict is resolved, the relationship moves to deeper levels of caring. You have increased trust, affection, delight and pleasure in each other's company.

These stages are common to relationships: those between good friends, siblings, parents and children, students and mentors, and intimate couples. Each stage will be repeated over and over during the relationship. Each stage can be a decision point: Do you continue this relationship or end it? Each time you choose to work through the stages in a positive way, the relationship deepens and the commitment between you is strengthened.

## **Daily temperature reading:**

- Appreciation: Take turns expressing appreciation for something your partner has done.
- New information: Tell your partner something which lets him/her in on your mood, your experiences, your life.
- Puzzles: Take turns asking each other something you don't understand (either about your own behavior or that of your partner) that your partner might be able to explain.
- Complaint with request for change: Without placing blame or being judgmental, cite a specific behavior that bothers you and state the behavior you would like instead.
- Hopes: Share with your partner what your dreams/hopes are, especially those which involve both of you.

## **Relationship Warning Signs & Successful Relationship Keys**

In this relationship am I:

- 1) Disregarding my own intentions?
- 2) Overlooking behavior that deeply hurts me?
- 3) Covering up behavior I despise?
- 4) Appearing cheerful when I'm hurt or angry?
- 5) Allowing my standards or values to be compromised?
- 6) Assuming responsibility for all the problems in our relationship?
- 7) Believing I have no option but to stay?
- 8) Experiencing a deepening sense of loneliness?
- 9) Considering a relationship (or already have begun) with someone else?
- 10) Becoming critical of everything regarding my partner?

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### **Successful Relationship Keys**

NOT: I've been unhappy up until now, and I expect you to change all that.

INSTEAD: I am a worthwhile person, capable of and deserving of a loving relationship with someone. I'd like that to be you, but if not you, I'm worthwhile enough to be loved by lots of people.

### **Self-Worth Affirmations:**

- I am the most important factor in any relationship.
- I am a valuable human being, but I can be even more valuable than I am now, especially to myself.
- If I love me, understand me, and am really honest with myself then full sharing relationships will come naturally. They may take a little longer to develop but they are likely to be relationships worth waiting for.

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### **Steps for Building Loving Relationships into your Daily Routine**

- Hug someone important to you.
- Do something thoughtful for someone give of yourself in ways other than gifts.
  - Listen to them.
- Follow through on your promises
- Ask for help when you feel overloaded; then accept that help without criticizing their performance.
  - Make an active choice to let someone else have his/her way when you disagree.
  - Tell someone you care about them.
  - Allow someone to use a personal belonging that you value.
- Believe that others will do what they tell you.
  - Set aside some time for quiet talk.
- Share some of your secrets, even when that's risky.
  - Try to reduce the frequency of judgmental thoughts about other people's behaviors.