

Ten Tips for Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships bring happiness and health to our lives. Studies show that people with healthy relationships really do have more happiness and less stress. There are basic ways to make relationships healthy, even though each one is different - parents, siblings, friends, spouses or a significant other. Here are ten tips for healthy relationships.

1. **Keep expectations realistic.** No one can be everything we might want him or her to be.

Sometimes people disappoint us. It's not all-or-nothing, though.

Healthy relationships mean accepting people as they are and not trying to change them.

2. **Talk with each other.** It can't be said enough: communication is essential in healthy relationships.

It means—

- **Take the time.** Really be there.
- **Genuinely listen.** Don't plan what to say next while you're trying to listen. Don't interrupt.
- **Listen with your ears and your heart.** Sometimes people have emotional messages to share and weave it into their words.
- **Ask questions.** Ask if you think you may have missed the point. Ask friendly (and appropriate) questions. Ask for opinions. Show your interest. Open the communication door.
- **Share information.** Studies show that sharing information especially helps relationships begin. Be generous in sharing yourself, but don't overwhelm others with too much too soon.

3. **Be flexible.** Most of us try to keep people and situations just the way we like them to be. It's natural to feel apprehensive, even sad or angry, when people or things change and we're not ready for it. Healthy relationships mean change and growth are allowed.

4. **Take care of you.** You probably hope those around you like you so you may try to please them. Don't forget to please yourself. Healthy relationships are mutual.

5. **Be dependable.** If you make plans with someone, follow through. If you have a deadline, meet it. If you take on a responsibility, complete it. Healthy relationships are trustworthy.

6. **Fight fair.** Most relationships have some conflict. It only means you disagree about something, it doesn't have to mean you don't like each other. When you have a problem:

- **Negotiate a time to talk about it.** Don't have difficult conversations when you are very angry or tired. Ask, "When is a good time to talk about something that is bothering me?"

Healthy relationships are based on respect and have room for both.

- **Don't criticize.** Attack the problem, not the other person. Open sensitive conversations with "I" statements; talk about how you struggle with the problem. Don't open with "you" statements; avoid blaming the other person for your thoughts and feelings. Healthy relationships don't blame.

- **Don't assign feelings or motives.** Let others speak for themselves. Healthy relationships recognize each person's right to explain themselves.

- **Stay with the topic.** Don't use a current concern as a reason to jump into everything that bothers you. Healthy relationships don't use ammunition from the past to fuel the present.

- **Say, “I’m sorry” when you’re wrong.** It goes a long way in making things right again. Healthy relationships can admit mistakes.

- **Don’t assume things.** When we feel close to someone it’s easy to think we know how he or she thinks and feels. We can be very wrong. Healthy relationships check things out.

- **Ask for help if you need it.** Talk with someone who can help you find resolution—like your friends, a counselor or a minister. Check the phone book for individuals who provide counseling services. Healthy relationships aren’t afraid to ask for help.

- **There may not be a resolved ending.** Be prepared to compromise or to disagree about some things. Healthy relationships don’t demand conformity or perfect agreement.

- **Don’t hold grudges.** You don’t have to accept anything and everything, but don’t hold grudges—they just drain your energy. Studies show that the more we see the best in others, the better healthy relationships get. Healthy relationships don’t hold on to past hurts and misunderstandings.

- **The goal is for everyone to be a winner.** Relationships with winners and losers don’t last. Healthy relationships are between winners who seek answers to problems together.

- **You can leave a relationship.** You can choose to move out of a relationship. Studies tell us that loyalty is very important in good relationships, but healthy relationships are NOW, not some hoped-for future development.

7. **Show your warmth.** Studies tell us warmth is highly valued by most people in their relationships. Healthy relationships show emotional warmth.

8. **Keep your life balanced.** Other people help make our lives satisfying but they can’t create that satisfaction for us. Only you can fill your life. Don’t overload on activities, but do use your time wisely and

try new things. You'll have more opportunities to meet _____ people and more to share with them. Healthy relationships aren't dependent.

9. **It's a process.** Sometimes it looks like everyone else is confident and connected. Actually, most people feel just like you feel, wondering how to fit in and have good relationships. It takes time to meet people and get to know them...so, make "small talk"...respond to others...smile...keep trying. Healthy relationships can be learned and practiced and keep getting better.

10. **Be yourself!** It's much easier and much more fun to be you than to pretend to be _____ something or someone else. Sooner or later, it catches up anyway. Healthy relationships _____ are made of real people, not images.

Want to know more about healthy relationships?

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