

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, HAPPY PEOPLE

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Most teenagers and adults want to have relationships with others. Whether it is a significant relationship or a best friend, humans want to form and have relationships. William Glasser and many other psychologists believe that relationships are the basis for human happiness and contrarily, unhappiness. Relationship discontent has led to drug and alcohol use, depression, anxiety, financial problems, job-related problems and loss, divorce, and even suicide. So, how can we foster and maintain healthy relationships?

First, we need to understand the pattern of relationship. When we first meet someone, it is common to want to spend as much time as possible with that person—talking with them, texting with them, and spending time. People often make several mistakes during this phase as well, and these mistakes can have significant impacts on what happens in the relationship later. Never fear, if you are in a relationship and made the mistakes, you can correct the problems and still remain together. This is often referred to as the Honeymoon Phase of the relationship.

After a period of time, the couple grows comfortable with each other. They may decide to live together, marry or just continue to date; however, patterns and routines develop. Each person realizes they have other interests and obligations, many of which have been neglected and some which they want to resume—family, friends, education, career development, children and hobbies. One, or both, attempt to move back into their lives and one, or both, partners feel abandoned and rejected. With those feelings comes emotions of hurt, anger, resentment, loss, etc. This is normal. Again, mistakes are made during this phase. This is often known as the Comfortable Phase. However, Unless these mistakes are caught and corrected, and the mistakes from the first phase are corrected, the relationship can not move into the third phase and it will either linger unhealthily wherein one or both partners will not be truly happy, or, it will dissolve.

The third phase of the relationship is the growing together and lasting phase. This is when two people have truly come together and are able to fully accept each other, recognize each other, communicate openly, trust each other fully and not place controls on each other.

COMMON MISTAKES

Common mistakes made in the first phase of the relationship are getting involved too quickly. People often meet each other on a social dating site, or somewhere socially and are so desperate for someone in their lives that they immediately decide they are “in love”. Or, they are physically attracted

to the person and decide they are “in love.” While you may be very physically attracted to the person and it may feel extremely exciting and arousing, it is important to understand that love happens over a period of time, generally longer for men than women. Research indicates that although women fall for their partners more quickly, men generally have a more difficult time getting past a breakup.

Another common mistake in the first phase is revealing too much about yourself too quickly. Because of the tendency to want to have so much contact, people, especially women, reveal far too much too quickly. It is a good idea to get to know each other, each others’ family and friends, what each other like to do, how the other person truly believes and thinks about others and the world, and then reveal personal things about oneself. Many people have found themselves hurt, or even killed, simply because they have revealed way too much too soon.

The third most common mistakes is going to bed too soon. Again, while you may well be totally physically or sexually turned on, if this relationship is truly worth having, there should be no rush. If there is, then the relationship is likely not worth having. Many people have rushed into a sexual relationship only to learn the other person is already committed or married, has venereal diseases which were transmitted, or, were raped or killed. Don’t be a victim.

Phase II Mistakes

If you gave yourself time, and you made it to phase II, common mistakes in this phase are:

Using what you learned about the person in phase one. For example, if you learned about the other partner’s ex partners, do not use that as ammunition or threats against him or her. That information was shared for a specific purpose, not to be used against him/her later. This is emotional abuse.

Smothering. As mentioned earlier, in this phase is when most people realize they have been neglecting other things or people in their lives, and they want or need to attend to them. A partner who feels rejected will often react to feelings of anger, resentment and hurt by attempting to smother the other partner, demanding more time and attention. This is control and manipulation. This leads to arguments, and eventually to the person wanting to spend even less time with you.

Control. A person is not a possession. You do not own your partner. Many people attempt to place controls on each other. For example, by telling their partners what they can and can not do, will or will not do. While it is okay to express to our partners what we would prefer in a relationship, it is absolutely controlling to tell another person, with expectation they will obey, what they will or will not do.

Another common mistake is refusal to compromise. Many people do not understand what compromise is, believing it is 50/50. Compromise is an agreement of some kind. It may be meeting each other half way. It may be agreeing to disagree on something. It may be simply supporting each other, even though you dislike what the other person is doing or saying. Compromise is a willingness to

accept that because you love, because you care and because you know you are mature enough to be yourself, you can work it out and be content with the outcome.

Communication is key to a healthy relationship. Listen to each other when the other person speaks. If you want to keep that first phase talking going, remain eager to listen. Be sure you know what the other person has said before you respond. Do not jump to conclusions. Avoid rolling your eyes, or making other rude gestures or noises when you disagree or do not like what has been said. Instead, try to see what has been said from that person's perspective—even if it is difficult. Validate the person's feelings, even if you do not agree with what was said. Remember, showing you understand feelings does not mean you either agree or consent to what was said, it simply means you are trying to understand, and that you care.

The last most common mistake is lack of appreciation for each other, or not showing that you appreciate each other. It is often too easy to get caught up in the every day routine of work, education, family, problems in the world, problems in life, etc., etc., etc. Sometimes, if people do not have problems, they have created them or are so engulfed in those of others. Before you know it, you have neglected yourself and your partner. Take time to appreciate yourself and your partner every day. What can you do to show yourself, and your partner, that you appreciate who you are and the relationship you have?

Learning to live with and grow with another human being is not easy. Many people become frustrated and give up. Many accept less than they deserve and tolerate emotional, or physical, abuse simply because one or both refuse to change behavioral patterns. Still others take the challenges and do grow together into the third stage of growth and happiness – together.