

# BUILD & STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS



**YOUR CHALLENGE:** Spend 30 minutes a day building the relationships in your life.

Each day spend quality time with—or do something special for—a loved one, friend, or coworker. (It doesn't have to be the same person every day.) Report the completion of your goal at [www.dmba.com](http://www.dmba.com) with a simple “yes” or “no.”

## INGREDIENTS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

No matter who you are or what you do, you interact with others. Some relationships we choose and develop, while others we simply endure. Naturally, we'll be more successful in our marriages, at our work, and with our friendships as we learn better relationship skills.

So what makes one relationship work and another not? Why do you feel closer to some people and unable to get along with others? While there are no simple answers, there are a few known ingredients for healthy relationships.

## COMMUNICATION

Learning to communicate with someone you care about isn't always easy. But it can be rewarding as you come to understand each other better. Take time to talk with each other. Express your thoughts and feelings, and listen as others express theirs.

- Ask questions so you can understand the other person better.
- When responding, restate what you think the other person said. (e.g., "I hear you saying...")
- Be aware of body language. For example, sitting with your arms crossed suggests you're angry or detached.
- Make frequent eye contact.
- Don't interrupt.
- Try to see their viewpoint.
- Stick to the subject at hand.
- Use "I" sentences ("I would like..."), not "You" sentences.
- Avoid emotionally charged words, such as "should," "bad," etc.
- Avoid name calling.
- Don't exaggerate, avoid using "always" and "never."
- Remember it's not about "winning;" it's about understanding.

## PERSONALITY TYPES

Each of us is born and nurtured into a personality type. Our personalities contribute to our relationships and form our preferences for other personality types.

Recognizing your own personality quirks and preferences is helpful when forming relationships. If your sister hates to be late, show up on time for dinner with her. If financial stability is a priority for you, avoid rooming with someone who is reckless with finances. Recognize and appreciate differences; don't try to make everyone else be like you.

## FORGIVENESS

Don't expect perfection in others. We all make mistakes, and we all need forgiveness. Learn to flow with others' quirks, and leave room for mistakes. Relationship experts say a key to a healthy relationship is forgiveness. Sometime, you will need forgiveness.

## MUTUAL RESPECT

Respect is key to healthy relationships. This means you recognize and appreciate each other's abilities. You value the other person's unique qualities and realize their opinions are as valid as your own. With mutual respect comes trust.





## HUMOR

Humor is essential for healthy relationships. We can't take life so seriously all the time or we'll lose our minds! Learn to laugh at yourself and laugh with others, and lighten up when things get heavy.

## HONESTY

Don't pretend to be someone you're not. You want people to like you for who you are. If you aren't authentic in your relationships, your friends don't really like you—they like the person you're pretending to be. Close relationships are built when you know and accept each other.

## SHARED INTERESTS

Learn something new from a friend. Then share one of your interests with him or her. It's also fun to learn something new together.

## OUTSIDE INTERESTS

In close relationships, it's important to find a balance between your dependence and independence. It's unhealthy for one person to become your universe. So maintain contact with friends.



Of course, include your partner when appropriate, but don't exclude yourself from friends and family.

## TIME

It takes time to form relationships, and time is a rare commodity. But remember, others are just as busy as you. With a little effort, you can develop and maintain great relationships. Here are some ideas you can try:

- Go to lunch with coworkers.
- Plan a weekend with friends.
- Show appreciation with a thank you note, flowers, or gift.
- Organize a group hike.
- Set aside an hour to spend with someone special.
- Find out someone's interests—the zoo or an art gallery, for example—then go together.
- Email a sentence or two to keep in touch.
- Make—and keep—a “date” with a loved one.

## IN THE WORKPLACE

You may spend much of your day at the office, so it's important to foster good relationships with coworkers. According to Pier Massimo Forni, cofounder of the Johns Hopkins University Civility Project, people find many behaviors of coworkers offensive. To foster positive worksite relationships:

- Greet people with a genuine smile.
- Treat everyone as a valuable member of the team.
- Refuse to participate in activities that mock another person.
- Don't gossip.
- If you bring your cellphone to work, turn the ringer off.
- Use cellphones only for important calls—and then take the call privately.
- Don't text message in the middle of a conversation or during an appointment or meeting.

- Keep personal details personal.
- Keep your voice at a reasonable level.
- If you listen to music while you work, use headphones.

## WAYS TO RUIN RELATIONSHIPS

- Demand your own way.
- Talk about yourself all the time.
- Show up late to everything.
- Be emotionally needy.
- Insist you're right and the other person is wrong.
- Try to make the other person feel guilty for having other friends or interests.
- Criticize your friend's spouse or significant other or family.
- Forget to return borrowed things, especially money.
- Ask favors, but never reciprocate.
- Be dishonest.
- Be condescending.

We all need healthy relationships. But relationships can be challenging. If you need help, read books, attend workshops, or get counseling about how to maintain healthy relationships.

## WANT MORE INFORMATION?

- American Heart Association <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living>
- WebMD <https://www.webmd.com/living-healthy>
- CDC Healthy Living <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyliving/index.html>

## SOURCES:

- Developing Healthy Relationships: Talking Point, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- APA Help Center, American Psychological Association
- Wellsource, Monthly Health Challenges

*Note: If you can't complete this challenge because of a medical condition, let us know and we'll come up with an alternative for you.*



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