



Enhance Your Relationships

CHALLENGE
Spend 30 minutes daily to enhance your relationships.

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Ingredients for a Healthy Relationship.”
2. Each day spend quality time with or do something special for a loved one, friend, or coworker.
3. To complete the Challenge, you must spend 30 minutes on at least 21 days this month enhancing your relationships. Use your monthly Health Challenge™ Calendar to keep track.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Ingredients for a Healthy Relationship

No matter who you are or what you do – you interact with others. Some of these people are strangers. Most represent a wide variety of relationships – family, work colleagues, friends, acquaintances, and others. Some relationships we choose and develop and others we simply endure. We will be more successful in marriage, at our work, and with our friendships as we learn better relationship skills.

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

Communication

Whether you have chemistry with someone or not, or whether you prefer Sue or Bill, all relationships eventually demand communication skills. Communicating with another human being can be a real challenge because you might see “white” what another sees as “black” – and in reality it might be gray! Life experiences, culture, even gender can influence your perception and the way you communicate. For example, men are usually more practical in life and women are more interested in feelings and emotions.

Learning to communicate with someone you care about is not 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 to others as they 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 are angry or detached.
- Make frequent eye contact.
- Don’t interrupt.
- Try to see their viewpoint.
- Stick to the subject at hand.
- Use “I” sentences (e.g., “I would like...”), not “You” sentences.
- Avoid emotionally charged words (e.g., “should,” “bad”).
- Avoid name calling.
- Don’t exaggerate (e.g., “always,” “never”).
- Remember that it’s not about “winning” – it’s about understanding.



Personality Types

Each of us is born and nurtured into a personality type. Some of us are more uptight about things that happen, and others are more relaxed. Our personalities contribute to our relationships and form our preferences and dislikes of other personality types. Recognizing your own personality quirks and preferences is helpful when forming relationships. If your sister hates to be late, then show up on time for that dinner reservation. If financial stability is a priority for you, avoid rooming with someone who is reckless with finances. Recognize and appreciate the differences, and don’t try to make everyone else be like you.



Forgiveness

Let's face it: No one is perfect. So don't expect perfection in others. We all make mistakes and we all need forgiveness at some point in our lives. We get angry, impatient, and fail to respect another person's needs. Learn to flow with other's quirks and annoyances, and leave room for their mistakes. Relationship experts say that a key to a healthy relationship is forgiveness. You may need forgiveness the next time.



Mutual Respect

Respect is a key ingredient to a healthy relationship. This means that you recognize and appreciate each other's abilities. You value the other person's unique qualities and realize their opinions are as valid as yours. In a respectful relationship, there is "give and take." For example, if you and your coworkers take lunch breaks together, take turns deciding where to eat lunch – or where to go on your walk.

With mutual respect, there is the possibility of trust. Trust comes with time and demonstrated behaviors that say a person is trustworthy. Using supportive language and actions, and respecting each other's opinions and boundaries, will help you avoid power struggles.

Humor

Humor is essential for healthy relationships. We can't take life so seriously all of the time or we will 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 aren't. 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 are pretending to be. Close relationships are built when you know and accept each other's shortcomings and idiosyncrasies. That doesn't mean you tell everyone the intimate details of your soul. Most of your relationships will be on a more casual level.

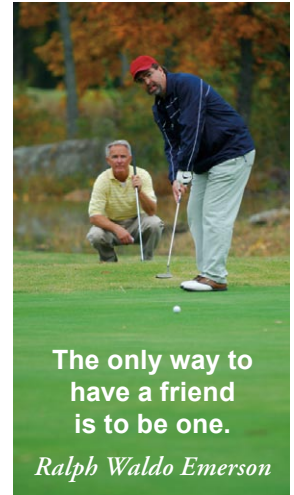
Wishing to
be friends is quick work,
but friendship is a slow ripening fruit.
Aristotle

Shared Interests

When you maintain your interests, you give another person the opportunity to learn about something new. Likewise, you can learn new things when you develop new relationships. Perhaps your friend enjoys origami. Why not ask him or her to teach you? Then, share one of your interests with your friend. It's also fun to learn about something new together, such as how to play tennis.

Outside Interests

In intimate relationships, it's important to find a balance between your dependence and independence. It's unhealthy for one person to become your universe. Maintain contact with friends, whether it's a volleyball team or your monthly book club. Include your partner when appropriate, but don't exclude yourself from friends and family. It's important to maintain your other relationships, too. Go on that annual fishing trip. Continue to plan tea parties. Your relationship will benefit from your outside interests.



The only way to
have a friend
is to be one.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Time

It takes time to form relationships, and time is a rare commodity. Keep in mind that others are just as busy as you are, but with a little effort, you can find time to develop and maintain relationships. Here are some ideas you can try for improving relationships:

- 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 what interests someone else – the zoo or an art gallery, for example – and then go there together.
- Go to a park or shopping mall to people-watch.
- Practice music together, "just for fun."
- Email a sentence or two to "keep in touch."
- Make – and keep – a "date" with a loved one.



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.



In the Workplace

You spend most of your day at the office, so it's important to foster good relationships with coworkers. According to Professor Pier Massimo Forni, cofounder of the Johns Hopkins University Civility Project, coworkers find many behaviors offensive. The infractions can be small (e.g., brushing your teeth in the water fountain, taking someone else's food from the refrigerator) or large (e.g., scolding colleagues in front of others or taking credit for someone else's work). 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 race, gender, age, disability, sexual preference, or religion.
- Don't gossip.
- If you bring your cell phone to work, turn the ringer off. Use cell phones only for important calls – and then, take the call privately.
- Do not text messages in mid-conversation or during an appointment or meeting.
- Keep personal details personal.
- Keep your voice at a reasonable decibel.
- If you listen to music while you work, use headphones.

Serious Issues That Affect Relationships

Stress

We all experience stress – whether at work or home. Learning to reduce and manage stress is a key ingredient for healthy relationships. First, know how to recognize when you're stressed and realize that it could put a relationship at risk. Second, do what you can to reduce and manage stress. Lastly, if a loved one is stressed, you have to set boundaries so that their stress doesn't overwhelm you. If appropriate, do what you can to help your loved one cope. Wait until a person has unwound or relaxed before bringing up requests or difficult issues.

Past History

Dealing with your past history through counseling or support groups may be important to forming healthier relationships. Forming healthy relationships may be more difficult for those who have had traumatic or troubled childhoods or whose parents were unstable or abusive. Trusting others is more challenging if you have been abused. Developing relationships with others who can form healthy relationships may be challenging, so dealing with and resolving the past is important.

Abuse

Some people are extremely controlling, forcing others to yield to their will. Physical or emotional abuse is never part of a healthy relationship. A person should never tolerate physical or emotional abuse. Domestic violence must be dealt with by skilled professionals. Anyone who believes a child is being abused must seek the proper social services to ensure the child's safety. If you or someone you know is being abused, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE) or your local emergency services (9-1-1).



Addictions

Most people are addicted to something. Alcohol, drugs, sex, television, and gambling addictions can interfere with relationships and cause great destruction. If a person has an addiction or is with someone who has an addiction, getting treatment is necessary for a healthy relationship. In contrast, someone who is co-dependant does not have an addiction per se but enables someone who does. This is also an unhealthy response that needs to be addressed for a healthy relationship to exist. If something controls your life and interferes with work, relationships, or your health – get help in breaking the dependency.

Ways to Ruin Your Relationships

- Demand your own way.
- Talk about yourself all the time.
- Show up late to everything.
- Be emotionally needy.
- Insist you are right (and the other person is wrong).
- Try to make the other person feel guilty for having other friends or interests.
- Flirt with your friend's spouse or significant other.
- 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.

Sources:

1. *Developing Healthy Relationships: Talking Points*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
2. *APA Help Center*. American Psychological Association.





Enhance Your Relationships

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record each day you spend at least 30 minutes to enhance a relationship.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you spent quality time on or did something special for a relationship. You must meet this goal at least 3 times a week or 12 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of good health and wellbeing.
4. Turn in your Health Challenge™ form if requested, or enter your completion of this Challenge on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

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MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____		
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_____ Number of days this month I exercised in water

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____

