

INSPIRING MATERIAL

Conscious relationships



Learn the Art of relating from the Heart

”Conscious relating opens up extraordinary feelings of Love, Freedom and the Magic of living”

— Andreas Eder

We all have the power within to improve our relationships with others.

How do you get on with those around you - your partner, children, grandchildren, siblings, even your closest friends?

Would you describe your relationships with these people as good in the main or do things often feel strained with definite room for improvement?

Although when we talk about relationships in general, it's romantic ones that first tend to spring to mind, our attachments and interactions with other people in our life can be just as significant.

“Relationships are key to our health and happiness and give meaning and purpose to our lives”

We're highly social beings and early humans needed to live together and get on in a group to ensure survival. This means we have a deep need for social inclusion and research shows that a lack of social support *is as bad for you as smoking*. Social isolation is associated with heightened risk of disease and early death, whereas warm and supportive relationships have long-term benefits for health and longevity.

Read more on the next page...



ABOUT CONSCIOUS RELATING

If relationship isn't going well, we may find ourselves harboring feelings of anger, resentment, guilt or general sadness, depending on the situation and how it impacts us. For a relationship that has seriously broken down, be this due to betrayal, major disagreement or other factors such as drug or alcohol addiction, professional help may be the best option to try work through it, either by seeing a counsellor alone or ideally in the form of couples or family therapy. Unfortunately though, even with the best will in the world, sometimes it can be healthier to walk away (easier with some types of relationships than others, of course).

The good news is that when it comes to the daily niggles and gripes everyone has unhelpful patterns of communication we may have fallen into with our nearest and dearest, a lot can be done to improve matters.

Here we look at five factors to bear in mind for better relationships:

LEND AN EAR

Possibly one of the most powerful tools in the relationship improvements box, active listening is very different from sitting nodding, wondering when you will get your chance to speak or carry on with whatever it was that you were doing before. And it is the complete opposite of muttering "Uh huh," while browsing your phone as someone tries to tell you about their day. "We have so many pressures, distractions and pulls on our attention that it can be difficult to be fully present even with those closest to us but ensuring someone feels heard and understood is really important," confirms Dr Hibberd, author of *The Imposter Cure*, (Octopus). Pointers for active listening include good eye contact (making sure not to stare intently as this can be intimidating), open body language (leaning towards the other person and avoiding crossed arms and legs), and an awareness of when to respond and when to stay quiet.

It's important not to interrupt or immediately override someone's story with one of your own - "You think that was a bad day, that's nothing - wait 'til you hear mine!"

Instead, when they finish speaking, try showing that you have been listening by summing up what they've been saying without judgement and with an invitation for them to continue. "So, it sounds as though you felt disappointed today because you didn't get the feedback you were hoping and had worked hard for?"

For something seemingly so simple, active listening can take practice (it's a learned skill when people train to become counsellors, for instance) but it is definitely worth the effort in terms of the difference it can make in any kind of relationship.





A BALANCING ACT

I have been researching the secret of lasting, healthy relationships and noted that the couples with these clock up five positive interactions for every negative one. I could almost predict the marriages are heading for divorce based on this magic 5:1 ratio.

"The bottom line: even though some level of negativity is necessary for a stable relationship, positivity is what nourishes your love"

- Dr Grotzman

An interaction can be as simple as a loving touch or gesture such as reaching for our partner's hand or simply an experience of being listened to attentively. as described previously. A negative one can include something neutral like failing to make a comment on something our partner shows us as well as dismissive or critical statements such as shrugging our shoulders to indicate we don't care or rolling our eyes sarcastically.

I could also address that couples need to regularly demonstrate appreciation and respect for one another, something that sometimes gets lost over time. Although his balance theory has been developed to apply specifically to couples, there may be lessons that can be taken on board for other relationships given that everyone has a need for appreciation and we can all be guilty of taking others for granted.

MAKE THE TIME

Without quality time together, it's easy to lose touch with what's going on in someone else's life, even when we're living under the same roof.

We also have less shared, positive experiences to cushion the difficult times or negative experiences, becoming ships that pass in the night, or even ships set on a clear collision course whenever the sea gets stormy!

"Quality time doesn't have to involve hours, it could be as little as half an hour or even ten minutes in some cases"

- Dee Holmes, Relate Magazine

It is about managing that time and keeping it free from distractions.

If your partner or child wants your company or attention and you have no choice but to take an urgent call or dash off for an appointment then be honest and let them know when you will be available for them later. But it is a good idea to build in pockets of regular time for family members - perhaps you decide that for half an hour after your child comes home from school you will spend that time uninterrupted with them or when your partner gets back from work you make a habit of having a cup of tea together.



While quality time can involve watching TV or a film together, I stress that an important aspect is the togetherness of an activity rather than simply people's proximity so try to remember that. I see children walking to school glued to their phones like zombies when previously they would have been chatting to friends walking alongside them.

Similarly, families can often be in the same room, all on different devices without any communication and it is something we hear complaints about in the counseling room. It can be a good idea to set healthy boundaries regarding the use of social media, such as no phones at the dinner table or during a certain time of day. These boundaries will be different for each family, on the significance of time and how it is spent.

Having experiences together is important in relationships, whether that's something major or something as simple as sharing a meal or a joke.





EXPLANATIONS & UNDERSTANDING

Have you ever experienced a situation where someone stomps around, slamming doors with a pained, angry expression on their face, leaving you unsure if you have upset them, and feeling it is best to stay out of the way?

Later you discover they were stressed over something completely unrelated to you, or they thought they were sending out a clear message they were tired and needed help but you had no idea.

When difficulties arise in a relationship, often ask people if they have told those close to them how they feel and am often told they would expect that person to already know, but we can't assume others, even those closest to us, will be mind readers. They may interpret a situation differently or not have a clue you see something as a problem as it hasn't been the case in a previous relationship. You can't underestimate the power of explaining.

It is also easy for miscommunication to arise when using text or WhatsApp, where there is no tone of voice or body language to help with communication. Saying that, there may be times when writing things down to start a dialogue can be useful in opening up lines of communication. For a situation in a family that continues to cause issues or arguments, you might suggest everyone to write down three things they feel would be helpful in resolving it and then sit down and discuss them.

Sometimes writing a letter to a partner, parent, or friend could be a useful exercise if you find something difficult to broach face to face or think they may not let you finish what you want to say."

"Sometimes writing a letter to a partner, parent or friend is a useful exercise if you find something difficult to broach"



ROLE PLAY

If you've ever noticed that your interactions with different people vary and they seem to bring out different sides of you, welcome to the world of Transactional Analysis, or TA.

This is a theory developed in the 1950s that is used by some therapists to help explain why we think, feel and behave the way we do, particularly when it comes to our relationships with others. Very simply put, the theory involves three sub personalities known as ego states - Parent, Adult and Child - that we regularly switch between (with some further divisions within these, such as Nurturing Parent and Critical Parent). It explains that we take on different roles depending on who we are dealing with and how we feel at that time, and it can be easy to fall into unhelpful patterns and roles.

Realizing we are doing this provides us with the opportunity to shift gears into a response that can improve our interactions and relationships. For example, if you are regularly annoyed with your partner about not doing their share of the household chores, it can be easy to assume the role of Critical Parent and come out with an angry, judgmental statement. Switching into our rational Adult ego state means we might say something to them like "I feel I've been doing most of the chores this week and am really tired. I know you're working hard too but I'd appreciate help tonight."

This invites the other person to (hopefully) respond as an adult as opposed to taking on the role of sulky child or becoming critical themselves and telling you about all the things that they feel you haven't done that week, with the risk of the conversation escalating into a row.

Our relationships, whether with our relatives, partners, children, friends or colleagues, are wonderful things and they enrich our lives. By being more aware of them, we should all get more out of our own relationships.



ASKING QUESTIONS

You can also explore these questions for deepening and opening up the relationship for more love and joy and to experience more freedom and fulfillment

If you're worried about your relationship or just want to make sure that you're both on the same page so that you feel more happy and secure, ask yourself these questions.

This will allow you to take the time to think about your feelings and behaviour and mindfully decide if anything in the relationship needs working on.

- Are you able to talk to your partner when something is bothering you?
- Do you feel like you give each other enough affection?
- Are you satisfied with the way you resolve your differences?
- Do you make enough time for each other?
- Do you give each other enough space or do you need more?
- Are you emotionally and sexually satisfied?
- Do you agree on whether you raise them?
- Are your expectations of each other being met?
- Do you share the same values and support each other's goals?
- Is there anything you'd change about them?

Once you've had time to mull over these points, you can sit down with your partner and use your answers to start up a healthy dialogue about your relationship, where it is and what you want from each other moving forward.

”Relationships are key to our health happiness
and give meaning & purpose to our lives”





Also good to have in mind:

A FRIEND INDEED

A good friend is worth their weight in gold but when life is busy, how often do you manage a catch up?

With some people boasting hundreds of friends' on Facebook, it can be all too easy for friendships to become more virtual than real. Perhaps you used to send cards but now it is much easier to post a quick "Happy Birthday," or you've been messaging a friend for months but neither of you have actually spoken on the phone for a year, let alone met up to see each other in person. If this sounds familiar, it really can be worth making a little effort to bring a friendship back to (real) life. An unexpected phone call just to ask how they are, a card or ideally an arrangement to meet - that doesn't get postponed or cancelled so many times it never actually happens - can make all the difference, as will taking a genuine interest in what is going on in their life as opposed to only wanting to tell them about what is going on in yours. You never know when you will need your friends so it is worth cultivating them and showing them how much they mean to you rather than leaving them feeling you only ever reach out in a crisis.



WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

However hard one person tries, sometimes it's not enough to get a relationship back on track, and it can be worth seeking professional help if you want to try to salvage it. "Every relationship has ups and downs, and arguments in themselves aren't necessarily a bad or unhealthy thing if they lead to issues being resolved," says Dee Holmes of Relate. "When something seems to be continually looping around however, and arguments become less about practicalities and more of a personal attack with insults and resentment building, that is a red flag warning sign. Counselling with a qualified couple or family therapist can provide a safe space, free from distractions for people to start to get to the bottom of what the real issues are and how to work through them. It ensures a discussion doesn't escalate into just another row and the counsellor can reflect back what they are seeing going on to help additionally. *To find out more about relating related material, connect with me.*

CHILD'S PLAY

If you are a parent, building a healthy and trusting relationship with your child is probably one of the most important things you will ever do. No matter what age they are, you are effectively helping to shape another human being's self-esteem, and providing them with a good grounding for later life. When you communicate well with your child, it leads to a strong relationship, greater cooperation, and feelings of worth. If the opposite is the case, it can lead to your child switching off conflict and feelings of worthlessness. They are far less likely to open up about any difficulties or worries and it can be easy to lose touch with what is going on for them.



I could advise you this:

Be as courteous to your child as you would a close friend. If you regularly interrupt them halfway through a story or break off to pay attention to something else, you are sending the message that what they have to say isn't important to you. Unless other people are specifically meant to be included in discussions, hold important conversations with your children in private. Embarrassing them or putting them on the spot in front of other people will lead to resentment and hostility in the future.



Avoid towering over younger children

Physically get down to their level to talk, face to face.

Use 'door opener' statements like 'That's very interesting' or 'Tell me more about that' to encourage your children - or even your grandchildren - to share ideas and feelings and show you are interested and respect what they have to say. Your tone needs to be genuine and your focus on them.

If you are very angry about something, unless it is an emergency, you need addressing immediately, wait until you feel calmer and/or objective. Address the behavior rather than labeling the child - they may have done something you view as stupid or bad BUT they are not a stupid, bad child.

What your child deeply needs, is to feel accepted & appreciated even when their behavior isn't.
This is love.

*Hope this was helpful to you and this sharing helps you to start
experiencing more powerful and magical experiences
in your relationships!*



If you would like to know more about how you can create strong & deeply fulfilling relationships in your life, in any kind of relationship, connect to me and let's find a way that suits you and your needs and values.

You will also find more inspiring material on my website.

If you want to know more about my coaching or about the True Empowerment-programs I organize, feel free to come on your first free call with me.

Be well. Stay connected. Be happy.

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