

Empowering Patients: Healthy Relationships - Dr. Davidicus Wong

Why relationships matter

1. Social support from friends, family and partners are key to your emotional health and resilience.
2. Harmony in the home is essential to your wellbeing.
3. Loving friends and family support your health.
4. Conflicts at home, work or school are major sources of stress and contribute to anxiety and mood disorders.

The sources of conflict

1. **Incompatibility** (religion, culture, language, introversion/extraversion, values and beliefs.)
 - **Game changers:** incompatible values (core beliefs about right and wrong) abuse (physical, emotional or sexual).
2. **Cognitive Distortions** – When we start seeing each other differently.
 - **Mind reading:** making negative assumptions about the other’s intentions without checking them out.
 - **Excessive blaming:** when something goes wrong (or is left undone), it’s the other’s fault.
 - **All or nothing thinking:** seeing all of the BAD (and none of the good) in the other, in your relationship and your situation.
3. **Neglect and loss of intimacy.** Too often we can let the rest of our lives take over our life together.
4. **Feelings change.** We mistake the inevitable fading of infatuation and romantic love with not being in love. With attention and commitment, we can transition into enduring love, from passion to compassion.

The quirks that endear us when we fall in love eventually irritate us when the honeymoon is over, but they are the things we’ll miss when our loved ones are gone.

The 5 Love Languages (Gary Chapman)

1. Words of Affirmation
2. Quality Time
3. Receiving Gifts
4. Acts of Service
5. Physical Touch

The Qualities of Healthy Relationships

1. **Mutual respect** – for our individuality, our feelings and our ideas
2. **Commitment to one another and to our relationship.** We express our commitment with time, thought, patience, effort and a willingness to work together.
3. **Acceptance and management of the differences that make us unique** – personality, passions, preferences, spirituality, customs. Extraverts are energized by people and parties; introverts need solitude to recharge. Extraverts need to speak to think; introverts think before they’ll speak. With acceptance and understanding, we complement one another.
4. **Unconditional love:** mutual positive regard, compassion and good will.

Nurturing Your Relationship

1. **Foster emotional intimacy.** Agree on a habit of checking in with one another each day. How are you feeling? How was your day?
2. **Show your affection.** Express your positive feelings. Remember the 5 languages of love.
3. **Schedule regular dates.** Commit your time to what matters most. Don’t wait ‘til there’s time; make time!
4. **Communicate in a healthy way.** Take a breath and let anger cool before you react. Acknowledge the other’s feelings and point of view. Express how you feel without blame.
5. **When things get stale, have an affair . . .** with your partner.

The Four Things That Matter Most (Dr. Ira Byock)

1. “Please forgive me.”
2. “I forgive you.”
3. “Thank you.”
4. “I love you.”

The Four Foundations of Self Care

- **What you eat** (What you put into your body).
- **What you do** (physical activity and rest).
- **How you feel** (emotional wellbeing).
- **How you connect** (healthy relationships).

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