



THE TOP 5 TIPS FOR CREATING AND SUSTAINING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Love them or loathe them, we are all involved in relationships. So have you ever considered why we enter into relationships with others? Relating to another being means we have the opportunity to explore and discover who we truly are. We need to relate to others in order to affirm our existence.

In an ideal world, we would enter into healthy, trusting relationships feeling complete within ourselves and our relationships would be a vehicle for developing our sense of self. In reality, our previous experiences, beliefs and upbringing may leave us feeling less than whole and we can mistakenly believe that our happiness rests on finding another to plug the gap and solve our problems.

Being in a relationship is a journey of discovery. Ask yourself what you are experiencing in your relationships as a way of helping them to

understand the key challenges of life being presented to you. Our relationships are always changing but we can enhance their quality through holding some empowering and enlightening beliefs. The following 5 tips are aimed at helping you to improve your relationships.

1. Be part of evolution

People take different roads seeking fulfillment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road doesn't mean they've gotten lost.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

When we fall in love, we create an internal picture or representation of that person. This representation is our construction or fantasy, based on our own values, beliefs and the way in which we perceive the world. We often expect the other person to behave in a way which is consistent with the representation or image we have of that person. The problem with this is that people are continually changing and updating their personality based on new experiences and information. Relationship difficulties start when one person is not able to let go of the representation he or she holds of another allowing the other person to evolve.

A healthy relationship allows each person to evolve and change. Release your expectations of the other person. If your relationship is stagnating or

struggling, recreate movement and flow by asking “*How am I relating to this person right now?*” In “*The Seven Stages of Authenticity*” (see www.sevenstages.net) author, Neil Crofts, provides a model and suggestions about how we can allow our relationships to evolve, whilst remaining true to our authentic self.

2. Interdependency over co-dependency

“You can’t be successful with other people if you haven’t paid the price of success with yourself”

Stephen Covey

Relationships work best when both parties feel complete. If not, we may look for what we perceive is missing from ourselves in the other person. In Transactional Analysis, this is known as a “symbiotic relationship” (see <http://www.ita.org.uk>). Two people act as though they are parts of the same person. If you consider the words of romantic songs, this is often used in the lyrics (For example, Atomic Kitten’s “*You can make me whole again*” or Kelly Price’s “*Baby you complete me*”). Our concept of romance is often based on this notion of one person “completing” another.

Co-dependent relationships are one-sided and emotionally destructive. It means your primary focus is outside yourself and that you are seeking your happiness or self esteem from another person. It is important to live

your own life, to understand yourself fully and to honour your own needs. Healthy interdependent relationships are based on mutual trust, unconditional love and respect. For further information on developing interdependent relationships, read *“I’m Ok, You’re Ok”* by Thomas Harris, Arrow Books £5.99.

3. Embrace uncertainty

Love, like a river, will cut a new path whenever it meets an obstacle.
Crystal Middlemas

In increasingly uncertain times, we often strive to create more certainty around us. Being in a relationship is not about creating certainty. Marriage often ends in divorce. In 1961, there were 27, 224 divorces in Great Britain and by 2004 this had increased to 167,116 (National Statistics). To embrace uncertainty in relationships is to trust that things will change and we will grow. All relationships move through difficult times. Commitment to “seeing it through” is important and if your relationship isn’t working ask yourself *“What can I learn about myself from what is happening?”* Seeing relationships as an opportunity for personal growth empowers you to find solutions and to evolve. Commitment doesn’t mean staying in relationships that are draining or even dangerous. When it is clear the relationship needs to end the challenge is to release each other with love to find happiness elsewhere.

For further information on embracing uncertainty, read “*Embracing Uncertainty*” by Susan Jeffers, Holden Mobius £7.99.

4. Take responsibility

“Blame is useless. Blaming only gives away our power. Keep your power.

Without power, we cannot make changes”

Louise Hay

Taking responsibility is about owning your own feelings. It is best to avoid blame and statements such as “*you make me feel*”. Remember no one has the power to make you feel anything. The Seneca Wisdom of North America says that whenever we point a finger in blame, three fingers point back at us (Try that now and you will see it is true). Let go of the blame and shame tactics that are often used. As soon as you believe the other person is “*wrong*” or needs to change, or is causing you to feel miserable, you’ll become consumed by hurt and resentment and are likely to escalate the problem.

Healthy relationships exist where each person is able to own their feelings and to understand the personal message that his or her emotions bring. If you are feeling an emotion, work out *what is that emotion is trying to tell you?* It is worth remembering that we have no control over

how another person feels or behaves. We only have control over our own emotions and actions. *What do **you** need to change in order to move forwards?* Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) provides a useful framework for putting yourself back at cause. Visit the ANLP (Association for NLP) at <http://anlp.org/> for practitioners and training or read “NLP - The New Technology of Achievement” by Steve Andreas and Charles Faulkner, Nicholas Brealey Publishing Ltd, £7.99

5. Love yourself

“Each relationship you have with another person reflects the relationship you have with yourself”

Kimberly Kirberger

Our relationships with others mirror our relationship with ourselves. Being kind and loving towards your self is essential before a meaningful commitment can be made to another person. A good question to ask is *“How do I talk to myself?”* Are you gentle and loving, appreciative and non-judgemental about your qualities and nuances? Often we are our own worst enemy. Our self-talk can be cruel and disempowering. We treat our friends with compassion but have little for ourselves. The good news is that when we become aware of this we can change it. Think about the qualities you love and admire about yourself? Compliment yourself regularly and find ways of learning to accept yourself. Loving ourselves

fully, warts and all, allows us to love others unconditionally. *The Big Book of Me* by Nina Grunfield, Short Books £7.79 includes a chapter on self-love.

If you are experiencing relationship difficulties or would like to enhance your relationship visit www.associationforcoaching.com to find the details of a life coach who can help you.

Tiffany Kay

www.lifematters-business.co.uk

If you have found this self-help guide helpful then please let us know by emailing media@associationforcoaching.com

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