

## Relationship Resolutions

As more research shows that good relationships are vital to our mental and physical health, the question becomes how to have healthy relationships. How many do you need, how often do you need to interact with your friends, how do you make the ones you have better?

In this article you will learn the answers to those questions and learn how to have healthy, balanced relationships in your life.

### Improve the relationships you have

Outside of business, relationships can be broken down in to 3 basic groups: Romantic, family, and friends. Here are some tips for nurturing each kind.

**Rekindle your romance** - Relationships are like flowers. Give them plenty of water, sunshine, admiration and attention and they flourish. Ignore them and deprive them and they wither and die. What does your relationship need? It needs your time and attention. One of the main reasons relationships fall apart is that real life gets in the way. Children, job demands, friends, hobbies and sports can all take your time and attention away. But just as important are every day things like choosing to watch television in separate rooms in the evening. Instead, make efforts to spend time together:

- Rent movies or televisions show reruns that you both enjoy and watch together.
- If you have children that are still young, get a babysitter regularly (at least every couple of weeks) and go out for a date night, just the two of you.
- Meet for lunch.
- Always kiss and hug when you see each other or before leaving - even just to go to the grocery store or work.
- Run errands together and stop for a coffee break.
- Take walks together. Whether it is the mall or the park, walking is healthy and gives you a chance to talk.
- Talk to each other. It does not have to be about *the relationship*, and probably should not always be intense. Even if you are so uncomfortable with each other that talking about the weather seems awkward, it is a start.

**Kids need time too** - Hopefully by now the 1980's myth of 'Quality Time' has been totally debunked as the nonsense that it was. The truth is kids need as much time as you can give them. Whether they are young children or teens, they need you - and will communicate better when you spend more time with them and are actually a part of their lives. So how do you give your kids the time that they need when everyone is working full time and has activities (not to mention this time you are supposed to spend with your partner/spouse)? Make it a priority and look for things you can do together.

- Everyone has to eat every day. So plan at least one meal together each day. Whether it's getting everyone up a half hour early for breakfast together, or dinner with at least most of the family every night, children need to have consistent times that they know the family will be together. Studies have shown that families who eat meals together have children with better grades who are less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol. In addition, eating at home more often results in more fit children and adults.
- Turn off the ipods, cell phones, televisions, PSP's, DS's, videos, and all other personal electronic devices in the car and actually talk to each other. Interestingly, parents are often the worse offenders and can be seen chatting on their cell phones while dropping their kids off at most any school on any given day. This is your time to wish your child a great day, give him a hug and listen to what is planned for his day. Likewise when picking your child up from activities or school - use this time to communicate with your child. Wrap up your business call and put off chatting with your friends while you give your child the attention she deserves.

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- If you don't already have them, start some weekly togetherness rituals. Whether it's renting a family DVD on Sunday nights, pizza after football on Friday nights, Chinese take-out after karate, or pancake breakfast on Saturday morning, making a weekly family fun occasion gives everyone something to look forward to with the family.
- Do chores around the house together. Your kids may moan and groan, but it helps them take pride in their home and may even help get them invested in keeping it cleaner.

**Stay in touch with friends** - If you already spend time on the phone or in person with friends outside of work every week you don't need any help with this one. But if you find that time flies with everyone's busy schedules and you realize it's been months since you've called or spent time with friends, you need to work on maintaining closer contact with friends. Even if you work and have satisfying work relationships, it is still important to maintain relationships with friends outside of work.

The following recommendations are designed for people who have regular, work day contact with 'work friends'. If you do not work outside the home, see the recommendations in the following section for how often you should see or speak with friends.

- Call or email a friend at least once a week just to say hello. More often if you are not involved in a romantic relationship.
- Plan lunch or dinner with a friend at least once a month to catch up and maintain closeness.
- Foster friendships with other families if you have children, or with other couples.
- If you are not in a romantic relationship, get involved in volunteering or a club that meets regularly to meet new people and stay involved in your community.

## Friends - How many and how often

How many friends you need or want varies greatly by individual and by type of friend. Some people are happy to number 2 or at most 3 people as truly close friends; while others need 6 or more people they can call 'close friends' to feel happy. There is no right or wrong (except 0 - everyone needs at least one friend), only what is right for you.

If you work outside the home, you will probably have quite a few 'work friends' that you see everyday or during the week at work, but not outside of work. It is these daily interactions with others that helps to keep us fresh and connected to the outside world. It is these daily interactions that help keep our immune systems healthy and fend off disease and illness.

If you don't work outside the home, whether because of family obligations or your office is in your home, you need to foster additional friendships and aim for daily contact with at least one friend. How do you do this? Look for opportunities to enjoy outside contact through sports/fitness classes, volunteer work, a daily walking date with a neighbor, and lunch dates with business associates or friends. Emails and phone calls are also good, but aim for actual face to face contact with other people as well.

## Summary

Good relationships bring fun and comfort to our lives in addition to actually being good for us. Look for ways to foster yours and watch them bloom.