

RELATIONSHIPS

Foreword:

Keep in mind that not every one is "a people orientated" person, some are more "task or goal orientated". We are not talking here about right or wrong, but about personal choices and preferences. One essential guideline I can suggest is the following: Check your personal expectations and realise that all of us are different and do not necessarily want the same things from our relationships. This does not take away from the general sense of what is said below. Essentially it is about respect, freedom and responsibility.

How can we improve our relationships:

- By showing warmth and intention in what we say and do: if we are genuine our tone of voice reflects it, eye contact, body language are relevant...
- By being curious about the other person, interested and showing it intelligently.
- By being honest and clear in our statements or interaction: "you pushing me around, makes me angry..." (with words we criticise the action) but we should also act out our feeling. (and be congruent)
- By admitting when we are wrong, when we don't know or we just don't have the time, or when we are not interested.
- By being direct: "Will you come to a movie with me on Saturday?" (watch the timing on this one!) lol
- By appreciating what others do and saying so: "a thank-you etc... goes a long way!"
- By picking up on other people's mood, knowing what belongs where, paying attention and taking the time to listen to what the other has to say.
- By having the courage to confront a situation and not letting things pile up: it is better to deal with hostility or persistent bad mood before that relationship turns sour with resentment...Silence-sitting on feelings is the worst solution.
- By understanding that we are all unique, by accepting/welcoming our differences, by respecting other people's points of view and frames of references even if we disagree. If we are sure of ourselves, we don't need to convince others. Stay open, though.
- By being trustworthy: if asked, will/can I respect confidentiality? Do I stick to my promises or do I make excuses? And am I able to **SAY NO!** when I mean NO?
- By remembering that I control myself most of the time but never others
- By being responsible for my own feelings: I am unhappy-not-you make me unhappy...

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES — ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

(Some of these principles of course apply in general, but we are mainly targetting supportive skills. For instance if a friend is having a rough time, and wants help)

Look on these skills as a template, then adapt them to your personality, your way of engaging, your personal skills.

Body language: sounds obvious... **:o) Yours...and the other person's**

Words may disguise, body language reveals!

If you look away or are involved texting someone, I know you're not listening to me, so why should I bother talking about what is important to me?

Maintain eye contact but avoid staring, this can be intimidating and put someone off.

In the same way someone else's feelings are expressed by more than just words...be attentive...be sensitive... respect someone's personal space...(physically and emotionally) Be intuitive!

!google this topic, you will find many useful hints on how to spot whether someone is paying attention to you, or even just interested. :) very useful tool in various situations.

Verbal communication:

Listening demonstrates, it does not tell or judge!

It shows we value the other person.

Respect silences, try to hear the meaning and the feeling.

Empathise, postpone advice, check you understand, be aware of your own feelings...

Be yourself, be **genuine!**

What is he/she trying to say?

What does it mean for him/her?

How does he/she see the situation?

Does the situation trigger something off in you which could get in the way of you understanding the other?

Questions should encourage others to talk if they feel they want to, not probe into someone's life inappropriately.

Always observe whether your timing is right for the other person, or if you are just eager to know more.

Open ended questions help the other to explore what is troubling them: practice feeling natural to use these...lol

ex: Here are 5 words to start with: **who, what, where, when, how...**

Closed questions are those which block someone's flow:

What happened when you slammed the door? Opens flow

Did they get angry when you slammed the door? Closes

Avoid leading questions which include an answer, you may be wrong anyway!

Ex: Were you upset? (doh!) ask, How did you feel?

Avoid guilt-questions regardless of how natural they may sound to you, they don't help the person to go through

their feelings and grow through experiences.

Ex: Why did you open the door without checking their identity? The chances are if your friend has been the victim of a robbery, he/she feels already bad about this, without you rubbing his/her nose in it.

IF YOU REALLY CARE...and this is a personal choice.

THEN TAKE THE TIME TO SHOW IT

ALWAYS BE YOURSELF! If you don't care, don't fake it.

Useful links and bibliography:

Life and how to survive it (John Cleese and Robin Skynner) Amazon.co.uk

Families and how to survive them...(.....)

I'm ok, you're ok by Thomas A Harris (amazon.co.uk)

Anorexia Nervosa: the wish to change (A H Crisp...)

www.relate.org.uk

www.thesite.org (highly informative and especially for young people)

www.need2know.co.uk advice for students on many issues