

## Challenges in Building Relationships and Communication skills

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### **Abstract**

We interact with various types of individuals in every walk of our life and build a relationship with them as we associate with them in one or the other way. Relationships are built where there is mutual understanding between or among individuals. Every relationship is unique and people come together for many different reasons. A well-built relationship can create an impact on our life. It improves all aspects of our life. It may appear easy to build relationships with people, but the process is actually challenging. However if the mutual connection is developed, nourished and sustained, the outcome can be remarkable. It can make wonders in the life of each one of us. Relationships require a willingness to adapt and change as well as skills in communication and emotional awareness. Good communication is a fundamental part of healthy relationship. As long as you are communicating, you can work out whatever problem you are facing with. Direct and honest communication is a key part of any relationship. Relationships are an investment. The more you put in, the more you can get back. Strong and healthy relationships contribute to a long, healthy and happy life.

This paper discusses the need and importance of developing relationships. It focuses on challenges emerging while maintaining the relationships and suggests ways to overcome them. It briefly discusses the role of effective communication in building relationships and various ways of developing communication skills.

### **Introduction**

We interact with various types of individuals in every walk of our life. Such interaction may be with who we are in close contact like our family and friends or with new colleagues at work, at social meetings, at clubs etc. We are associated with these people in one or the other way; hence we interact with them and try to build a relationship with them.

'The term 'relationship' is derived from the word 'Relation' which is defined as a mutual affiliation or connection between individuals or groups of people or entities. 'Relationships are built where there is mutual understanding between or among individuals'. (1)

### **Need and Importance of developing relationships**

Everyone's relationship is unique and people come together for many different reasons.(2) We all engage ourselves with various kinds of relationships which arises from a particular need of a person. For example, we have family relations, intimate relations or friendships etc. for our personal and emotional needs. For professional needs we form business relations with our customers, colleagues, associates etc. For educational needs we have respectful relations with our mentors, teachers, guide etc. There are shared interests among people to form a relationship. We form relationships because we genuinely like someone, because we have something to offer that person, or because we share some common goal. We connect with someone who has common interest with which we can relate to. With our family and friends, we love, we care, we respect and hence we bond with them reciprocally. Employees form a relationship because of shared ideas and work interests in an organisation. In an educational institution, sharing of knowledge, ideas and/or any new information, bring students and teachers together to form a relationship. Every relationship is different, but they all matter. Our relationships give meaning and richness to our lives. (3)

A healthy relationship can be one of the best supports in our life. (2) A well-built relationship creates great impact on our life. It improves all aspects of our life. With good relationships, we can easily attain personal or career goals, because we are surrounded with like-minded people who support us to achieve our goals. Our communication and socialization skills are enhanced as we connect to people regularly and positively. A harmonious relationship is built among team members with common interest, who can successfully achieve the mission and vision of the organisation. Good mutual understanding and association with people can boost the morale and self-confidence of an individual enabling him to adjust with himself and with society. It helps him to improve his social well-being. He finds contentment, satisfaction and peace in many things. Thus we can say that a good relationship strengthens your health, your mind and your connections with others. People with strong social relationships can deal positively with effects of stress and can lead healthy life. The best relationships are the ones where laughter is shared, affection is given, feelings are heard and love is respected. Surely, it improves all aspects of our life.

### **Challenges in building relationships**

“Good relationships don't just happen. They take time, patience and two people who truly want to be together”.

Building relationships with others is not an easy job, but the process is actually challenging. (1) Once a bond of relationship is broken, it is difficult to mend it, though not impossible. For a relationship to grow and become unrelenting, it has to be nourished and maintained. Taking care of relationship is like nurturing a plant. There are times when the mutual bond of the individuals is tested by the adversities and challenges in life. Change in life is inevitable and it will happen whether you go with it or fight it. (2) Hence it is very essential to be flexible to adapt to the change that is taking place in any relationship. It allows you to grow both in good and bad times.

Stress in life can make you short tempered, which can easily poison your relationship. Different people cope with stress differently. Some may fight with their partners, some may stop communicating or relating with others or it might seem easier for some to snap at their partners. When you are frustrated and angry, you are not focused, you cannot communicate well. To communicate effectively, you need to be aware of your own emotions and in control of them, which means you should be able to manage your stress. Because when you are stressed you may misunderstand other person, may send confusing non-verbal signals ultimately adversely affecting communication between two people. It is only when you are in a relax state of mind that you will be able to reciprocate with correct response.

You need to reduce your stress by adopting different quick stress relieving techniques which might soothe you. We all have heard that laughter is the best medicine and it's true. Humour relieves tension and stress, elevates mood, enhances creativity and boosts energy. It helps to bring people together, creates a sense of intimacy and a positive bond. This bond acts as a strong buffer against stress, disappointment, disagreements and bad patches in a relationship.

Conflict is natural in any relationship, but some people raise their voices and disagree. The key in a strong relationship is not to be fearful of conflict, but to resolve the conflict with respect and love, without insisting on being right or degradation. You need to keep focus on the issue at hand, not to drag old arguments into it and respect the other person's views.

Relationships include fights, jealousy, arguments, faith, tears, disagreements, but a real relationship fights through all that, with love, trust and respect for all. With open communication, give and take process, by forgiving and forgetting. Forgiveness does not always helps in solving relationship problems but some people are not capable of forgetting and forgiving. Hence it is advisable to let them go along with your anger.

While building relationships all bonds are built on trust. Without it, we have nothing. It is very important to note that trust is hard to earn but easy to destroy. So trusting your team mates, colleagues, mentors, and guides is necessary for healthy relationship. Also trust yourself to be who you are.

“You don't develop courage by being happy in your relationships every day. You develop it by surviving difficult times and challenging adversity.” Epicurus

### **Role of effective communication in building relationship**

Good communication is a fundamental part of healthy relationship. As long as you are communicating, you can work out whatever problem you are facing with. Communication is more than just exchanging information. It is about understanding emotions and intentions behind the information. It is also about how you listen to understand the full meaning of what's being said and to make the other person feel heard and understand.

Effective communication includes non-verbal communication, engaged listening, ability to communicate assertively and capacity to understand yours as well as others emotions. (2). When both people feel comfortable expressing their needs, fears and desires, the bond between them strengthens. They trust and respect each other. It helps to deepen their connections, improves team-work, decision making and problem solving. Communication skills are the key to developing healthy relationships and to building a strong social support network. They help you to take care of your own needs and respect the needs of others. People aren't born with good communication skills; like any other skill, they are learned through trial and error and repeated practice. (6)

Though effective communication is a learned skill, it takes time and effort to learn and develop these skills. However if the mutual connection is developed, nourished and sustained, the outcome can be remarkable. It can make wonders in each of our lives.

So much of communication is transmitted by what we don't say. Non-verbal cues- such as eye-contact, leaning forward or away, touching someone's arms-communicate much more than words. You need to take some time to understand your partner's cues and be sure to communicate your own as well. For a relationship to work well, each person has to be receptive to sending and receiving non-verbal cues.

Never assume your partner. It is much healthier to directly express your needs to avoid any confusion. When you are an engaged listener, you understand your partner well, also make him feel heard and understood, allowing building stronger connections. To become an engaged listener, focus fully on the speaker, do not interrupt in between, and show interest in what is being said through non-verbal cues of the speaker, keep aside your own judgements, ask questions to clarify doubts.

It is always advisable to express your feelings, thoughts and needs in an open and honest way. You must respect others as well as value yourself and your opinion. You should be able to express even negative thoughts in a positive manner, learn from your mistakes, do not hesitate to ask for help when needed and learn to say 'No'. Do not let others take your advantage, but know your own limits. It goes a long way in developing effective communication and building healthy relationship. "Relationships-of all kinds-are like sand held in your hand. Held loosely, with an open hand, the sand remains where it is. The minute you close your hand and squeeze tightly to hold on, the sand trickles through your fingers. You may hold onto some of it, but most will be spilled.

A relationship is like that. Held loosely, with respect and freedom for the other person, it is likely to remain intact. But hold too tightly, too possessively, and the relationship slips away and is lost." Kaleel Jamison.

### **Conclusion**

'Relationships are investment in life. The more you put in, the more you can get back'. (2) The more relationships you have, the better. You never know when they will come in handy. Whether they are family, friends, school teachers, business people, government officials, elderly people, homeless people, children or whoever else. Building relationship will pay off in many ways, we may never have anticipated. Knowing the basic principles of healthy relationships helps keep them meaningful, fulfilling and exciting in both happy and sad times. They contribute to a long, healthy and happy life.

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