Relationships/Communication

The success of our biggest efforts often depends on enduring support from others. And our personal relationships are fundamental to our quality of life. So which interpersonal skills do you bring to the relationships that matter most to you?

Skills and Know-How

1. I am able to clearly and comfortably communicate my thoughts, ideas and feelings to others — and I’m not often misunderstood.
2. I regularly show kindness and affection to the people I care about.
3. I treat my family, friends and coworkers with respect and dignity. I hold them to the same standard in their dealings with me.
4. I am able to apologize when I’m in the wrong or have hurt someone.
5. I actively listen when others are speaking and acknowledge their views — even if I disagree with them.
6. I raise concerns honestly, but without blaming and shaming.
7. When arguing, I’m able to pause thoughtfully before I say something I might regret.
8. I know how to exit arguments in a healthy, positive way.
9. I can share in the joys and concerns of others without getting personally sucked into their experiences.
10. I refuse to tolerate hurtful or destructive behavior from others, and I’m willing to see my own role in the conflicts I experience.

Take-Action Tips
(on your own)

- Be reflective. Spend some quiet time thinking about the quality of your relationships and interactions with others: How fulfilling are they? Notice any negative patterns? Take note of both the strengths and challenges you see reflected in your relationships to date.
- Seek feedback. Ask some trusted friends for observations and reflections on your relationship skills — and then listen. Also, think back on the complaints and compliments you’ve heard from more than one person in the past.
- Read up. Choose a couple of good books that provide solid counsel in your skill-seeking areas and aim to cover a few pages a day.

Sign Yourself Up
(workshops/seminars/programs)

- Take a class. Universities and tech schools often offer professional-development courses in communication and interpersonal conflict resolution. Visit your local university’s Web site or the Learning Annex (www.learningannex.com) to see what’s available near you. Or check out Illumination University (www.illuminationuniversity.com) for distance-learning options.
- Participate in a relationship workshop. Many respected clinics and therapy and retreat centers, such as The Gottman Institute in Seattle (www.gottman.com) and the Option Institute in Sheffield, Mass. (www.option.org), offer weekend or weeklong seminars.

Hire Some Help
(trainer/coach/pro)

- Consult with a therapist or coach. Working with a therapist or life coach can help you improve your interpersonal skills. Look for a therapist in your region at the Psychology Today Web site at www.psychologytoday.com (click on “Find a Therapist”). Find a life coach through Coach University online at www.findacoach.com.

WEB EXTRA!

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