

# THE FOUR C's OF RELATIONSHIP WELLNESS

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It is often a challenge to begin and maintain good relationships. This is true for relationships between couples, within families, between friends, between co-workers and in organizations and communities.

It also applies to authority relationships such as employer-employee. This challenge is because too few persons have been socialized (or grown up), by one's family or culture, to relate well. These are some suggestions, strategies and related skills that will be sure to improve your relationships.

## 1. **Communicate Well**

**Communication is the “mouth, eyes and ears” of a relationship.** It is the giving and receiving of messages about facts, opinions and one's feelings. There can be no well relationship when such mutual sharing is blocked.

These are some of the good techniques:

- Learn to Listen Well.
  - *Don't interrupt.*
  - Verbally *reflect back* the facts and feelings which you have heard or picked up to be sure that you have heard correctly.
  - Share *empathy* (or the fact that you have appreciated how the person feels). All persons need this as well.
  - Give *appropriate feedback* on what is shared, only if the person is asking this of you.  
If no feedback is requested, then just listen! Sometimes all the person wants is to be heard.
- Be an active participant in two way communication. Share your own thoughts and emotions as is necessary.
- Don't force a discussion or try to communicate when either person is upset.

## 2. **Cherish Emotions Well**

**Emotion is the delicate “life giving blood” of a relationship.** Like our real blood, our emotions need constant nourishment, freedom to flow and freedom from toxic influences. These are some good ways to cherish the feelings of yourself and others:

- Be in touch with emotions
  - Be in touch with *your own emotions*. Share them.
  - *Be in touch with the emotions of others*. Listen to them and *empathize*.

- Express *positive emotions* constantly and sincerely.
  - Show the 4 A's: verbal and physical *affection, affirmation, appreciation* and *approbation* (praise)
  - Share humour, comfort, encouragement, patience and humility.
  - Be trusting as is appropriate.
  
- Handle conflict thoughtfully and wisely.
  - Don't "take out" your hurt feelings on others by verbal or physical attacks.
  - Express negative feelings with respect. Aim for reconciliation always.
  - Be willing to *apologize* when wrong and to *forgive* when wronged.
  - Express your concerns and feelings using "I statements" vs. "You accusations".
  - Seek clarification and negotiation for "win-win" solutions where no one loses or is humiliated.
  - Protect your feelings. Avoiding people who are constantly negative and who have no desire to apologize, change, or negotiate for a win- win relationship.

### 3. **Care Well**

**Showing care is the "muscle" of relationships.** It provides the acting out of love. No healthy relationship can exist without love shown in action. How can we care by loving? Here are some suggestions:

- Practice unconditional self-giving in helpfulness. Seek the "Whole Person" well being of others.
  - Put the other person first. Be there loyally when necessary. Seek to care more than to be cared for. Don't use the idea of love to enable dependency where you allow others to take advantage of you or vice versa.
  - Anticipate when others need help. Don't wait to be asked.
  - Love can be assertive when there is a problem. Here, through gentle confrontation, it will be "caringly corrective" when necessary, but not "rough".
  
- Build friendships through caring by:
  - Communicating one's experiences, concerns and related feelings
  - Giving mutual support for each other in difficult times – be there
  - Sharing interests and activities and humour
  - Keeping up with one another's life progress and well-being.
  - Maintaining mutual contact and time for interaction. Do not let the relationship be one-sided

### 4. **Cooperate Well**

**Cooperating mutually is the "Central Nervous System"** or coordinating centre of relationships. Persons can only work together to achieve a goal if there is harmony. Harmony comes only through cooperating.

Codependency is the opposite of healthy cooperation in relationships. *It is where persons try to feel secure by exploiting others or by accepting being exploited by others.* Continuous exploitation on one hand or passivity on

the other can cause perpetual confusion and stress. These must be avoided and replaced by mutual cooperation if a relationship is to be “well.” These are some ways to cooperate well:

- *Show each other mutual respect.*  
Avoid taking advantage of the other person through verbal abuse (e.g. shouting or name calling), emotional abuse (e.g. neglect, manipulation or blackmail) or physical abuse (e.g. any physical contact whatever out of anger).
- *Respect each others’ autonomy and your own.* Avoid trying to control, domineer, manipulate or play “games”.
- *Be assertive* when necessary vs. passive. Let the other person know gently but firmly when they have crossed the line. *Yet Seek negotiation vs. coercion* where differences exist.
- *Cooperate in teamwork for caring. Think “we” and not “I”. Pull your weight and avoid competing for control, recognition, or to outdo the other person.*  
*Act responsibly* by the following behaviours:
  - *Think ahead* of what needs to be done even without the other person saying or reminding.
  - Show *punctuality*,
  - *Stick to your word*
  - Be always *truthful**Be consistent* and reliable *Negotiate for mutual responsibility*. Thus avoid rescuing the other person. Also avoid leaving anything to be done by the other person. Codependent individuals often complement each other in a dysfunctional way in relationships through combining these behaviors.
- *Protect yourself from exploitative persons when necessary.* Separate and maintain a distance when all aspects of cooperation fails and you are constantly in danger of being abused or otherwise taken advantage of. Do not allow yourself to be in bondage to any person, group or organization where other individuals behave in such a way as to make well relationships impossible. Make sure that you would have done your best to make the relationship a healthy one. If you have, then move on without guilt.

## CONCLUSION

Healthy relationships are a joy and enable the wellness of the whole person. Yet relationships require constant attention. They also require personal growth. So do try to develop these skills and use them as regularly as possible. Communicate, cherish emotions, care and cooperate well.

Happy relating!