



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Keeping Your Relationships Strong

Relationships are an important and rewarding part of life. People are designed to seek out meaningful social connections that bring fulfillment to their lives. Strong and healthy relationships have many beneficial effects on both your physical and mental health.

Clinical studies have shown that having strong social connections actually increases longevity and improves overall health:

In 1989 a study from Stanford Medical School found that women with metastatic breast cancer who attended weekly support meetings lived twice as long as those who did not attend.

Another research project from the San Diego Healthcare System concluded that women with heart disease and small social circles die at twice the rate as those who have more friends.

A study of midlife women showed that women in highly satisfying marriages were shown to have a lower risk for heart disease than women in less satisfying marriages.

Medical research on degenerative neurological disorders has shown that the risk of developing dementia is lowest among people who have a variety of fulfilling relationships and that people who feel especially lonely are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.

The Mayo Clinic reports that adults who are in loving reciprocal relationships are less likely to suffer from chronic illness and have lower mortality rates.

Ongoing research from the University of North Carolina shows that physical contact from someone you have a strong bond with reduces blood pressure, improves mood, and increases pain tolerance.

For more information or support on keeping your relationships strong contact the work/life experts at **BalanceWorks®** by calling:

1.800.327.2255

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In addition to the physical benefits, healthy relationships also have a positive impact on mental health and emotional wellbeing. Strong social networks provide individuals with the support they need to solve problems, deal more effectively with hardships, and develop a sense of control over their own circumstances. People who feel supported report feeling valued and people who provide support to others experience increased self-esteem and self-confidence. Individuals who have many healthy relationships are also more likely to take on new and different challenges as they know they will be supported by their loved ones even if they fail.

Healthy relationships also help people cope with stress. Friends help deal with adverse events by providing support and information that helps people handle their stressors more objectively. People who manage stress effectively are more relaxed and energized. Lower stress levels enable individuals to think and communicate more clearly, allowing them to relate to others in more positive ways and resolve conflicts more efficiently. Simply knowing that you have people in your life that you can call on when you need them helps to ward off depression and anxiety. Overall, healthy relationships are fun and make you feel good about yourself.

Since strong social connections are so important to happiness and overall health, here are a few tips to keep your relationships healthy and flourishing:

Be Supportive – Actively listen when your friend or loved one wants someone to talk to, lend a hand when they are in need, be sympathetic when they fail, and help them celebrate their achievements.

Practice Loyalty – You don't always have to agree with your friends or family members, but

refrain from judging them. Instead, honestly and respectfully offer your point of view, while assuring them that although you do not necessarily agree with their decision or actions, it does not change your relationship.

Offer Forgiveness – Everyone you will have a relationship with will eventually disappoint you in some way. Accept that people are not perfect and that they will make mistakes. When a friend or loved one hurts, offends, or disappoints you, analyze their motives. If they were not intentionally malicious, forgive them and move on. It is not worth losing an important relationship over a minor misunderstanding.

Communicate Regularly – Make sure that the lines of communication are always open. Check in with those you care about on a consistent basis. Ensure that you know what is going on in their lives and vice versa.

Show Dedication – It is so important to nurture the relationships that are really important to you. As children, we spend countless hours with friends and family, but as adults, our schedules are often so packed with work, errands, and raising our own families that it becomes difficult to find time for anything else. Preserving any relationship takes work. If someone is important to you, make the effort to spend quality time with them.

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