

RELATIONSHIP REVIEW

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Most of us find life pretty challenging today. When times are tough and we have many demands on us, our resources need to be used wisely. One of those resources is our emotional energy. We need to see how and where we are allocating it. Where we use it and misuse it.

As our cupboards need to be cleared out regularly to separate the clutter from what is useful, so we need to do that with other areas of our lives. Relationships are one obvious area which can boost or drain our emotional energy

Good relationships are investments in health, happiness and wellbeing. The results of a recent longitudinal study by Fowler and Christakis that spanned over 20 years suggested that happiness and positive emotions spread from person to person within a social network. They refer to emotional contagion whereby people “catch” emotional states from each other. Our happiness therefore depends on the happiness of others with whom we are connected and happiness like health becomes a collective phenomenon. They concluded that this does not just relate to immediate relationships and friendships but even indirect ones i.e. friends of friends.

So let's do a review of the main relationships in your life. We can't make others change but we can look at ourselves and evaluate our attitudes, behaviour and choices to improve the quality of our lives. Usually modifications to ourselves and our attitudes and behaviour result in changes from others. Why? Because we function in a system and changes to one part of the system affects all the others – either positively or negatively.

Starting with yourself, ask yourself the questions:-

- Who is there in my life who I have neglected, unappreciated or taken for granted?
- Am I the kind of friend I would want to have?
- Do I know how to have reciprocal relationships/friendships? There needs to be an equal exchange of energy. Like a bank account we have to make deposits as well as withdrawals if we are to keep relationships afloat.
- How do I rate as a daughter? A granddaughter? A mother? A wife or girlfriend? A husband, son or father?
- Do I take my frustrations and moods out on others rather than looking for support in constructive ways.
- Do I know how to deal with conflict with important people in my life in a way that is not damaging to them or the relationship?
- Am I intolerant of others who are slow, old or not thinking the same as I do?
- Do I get over involved in others lives in a way that leaves me feeling drained?
- Do I know how to ask for help when I need it?
- Do I allocate time for friendships and relationships?

Then review the most important relationships in your life?

- Which of my friends do not add to my life? Who steals energy- draining me, making too many withdrawals and does not give back in return.
- Which of my friends do I no longer share values or common interests with?
- Which of my friends make me feel bad about myself for some reason or another
- Which of my relationship or friendships are destructive to me
- Who of my friends do I feel close to, comfortable with and trust.
- Who has hurt and angered me where I just keep going and not say a word?

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Now is the time to make some decisions. What is going to change? What just requires tweaking and what or who has no place in my life anymore?

What behaviour of mine do I have to address in order to add more to my own and others lives? Which friendships/relationships have to go for my own wellbeing?

Finally:- what might stop me from doing what I know I need to and how will I overcome that to make it possible.