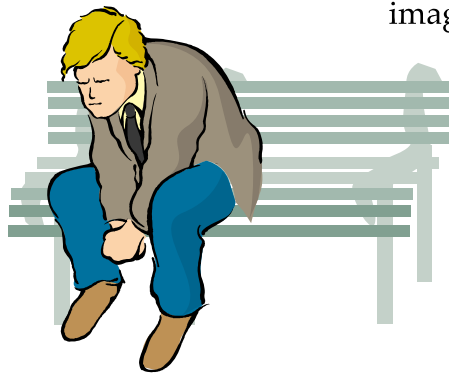


Unit 2: Connections: Living Well with Others

Introduction

“I wouldn’t be your friend if you were the last person on Earth!”

We are all familiar with this statement. It tells someone that a relationship with no one would be better than a relationship with him or her. Think of someone to whom you might say this statement. Then



Imagine being alone day after day.

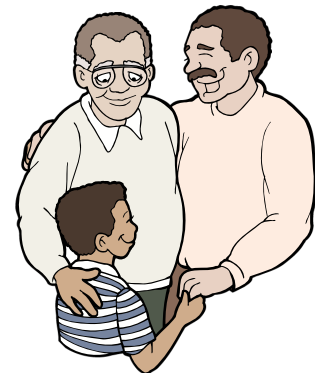
imagine a world in which there is only you and that person. Imagine being alone day after day. You eat alone. You go for walks alone. When you play a game, you must take on the **role** of all the players. The only conversations you have are with yourself. There’s no one else with whom to agree or disagree. The only thoughts and feelings you ever hear are your own.

After a few days, perhaps a few weeks or even months, you probably would find yourself approaching that other person and saying: “Well, you are the last person on Earth, and I’d like to be your friend!” But even though that other person is the only friend you can have, you will not necessarily develop a strong and healthy relationship. Healthy relationships are created by people who communicate honestly and openly. In healthy relationships, people listen closely to one another. People create healthy relationships by showing respect for others—even when they disagree with them.

Why We Need Relationships

Most of us enjoy periods of **solitude**, or spending time alone. We enjoy some privacy during which we can reflect on our life, daydream, or just turn off the part of us we share with the outside world.

However, almost all of us are also “social creatures.” We like to live in families and communities, and we like to interact with other people. We like companionship—we like talking, doing things, and being with others.



We like to live in families and communities.

We fulfill many of our needs through our relationships. Family members and close friends fulfill our need to be loved. As those around us fill us with love, we develop our capacity to love others. Love can come in different forms. The healthy love a parent feels for a child is total and *unconditional*. A parent will feel love for a child no matter what that child does or who the child becomes. Love between serious dating partners is often electrically charged and can deliver intense joy or devastating hurt. Love between friends mixes the lasting quality of family love with the strong attachment felt between dating partners.



The healthy love a parent feels for a child is total and unconditional.

Through relationships, we also enjoy a sense of acceptance. Most of the people we meet do not reject us. Close friends and family try to understand our needs and wants, and they lend support even when we fail or stumble. Even casual friends fulfill our need to be accepted. Though we may not share **intimate** secrets or spend our leisure time with them, they **acknowledge** our existence and accept us as worthwhile.

Relationships also enrich and broaden our lives. We learn about other people's experiences in the world. We find out about their feelings, ideas, and beliefs. We discuss and argue ideas and notions. We learn how to express ourselves effectively as we watch the way others respond to us. Without the give-and-take we share with others, our world would contain only our single voice and view. With others, our world becomes dynamic, like a stereo system that delivers many voices and sounds.

Some of us may need many close and casual friends, and a tightknit family to fulfill our social needs. Others of us may only need a few close friends to feel emotional satisfaction. Discover what kind of social person you are. Your health begins with knowing yourself. As the famous Greek philosopher Socrates once claimed, self-knowledge is the starting point: *know thyself*.

Establishing Relationships: Connecting

Fortunately, we will never have to live in a world that includes only one other person. On the other hand, many of us are surrounded by hundreds, even thousands, of people, yet we still may feel a sense of loneliness and **isolation**. People may be only a few feet away, yet they might as well be in another state.

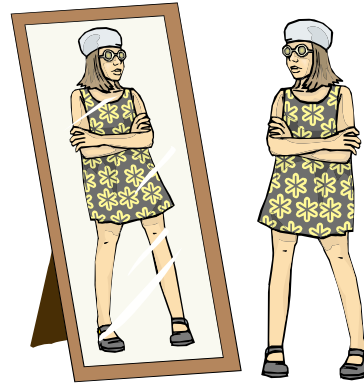
Our Self-Image: How We See Ourselves Is How Others Will See Us

What keeps us from reaching out and making contact with people? Often the answer is the fear of rejection. Few things in life make us feel worse than having someone reject us. And yet, people will rarely reject us unless we reject ourselves. This point is so important in any kind of social relationship that it deserves rephrasing: People are less likely to reject us if we have a good **self-image**. Our self-image is the picture we have of ourselves.

Handling Rejection	
Wait it out.	Storm clouds may blow over quickly—no one holds the spotlight forever.
Try a direct approach.	Ask if you have done or said anything to earn the rejection you are getting—the head-on approach can clear the air.
Take the hint.	Some efforts are useless—to be different or unaccepted by any one group does not mean that you are worth any less.
Settle for less.	Some people get left out of close friendships but get included in informal group activities—you can enjoy group companionship.
Catch up later.	Some teens are late bloomers—personalities and talents develop later in life.

Part of our picture of people includes the way they see themselves. We are apt to view a person who likes himself or herself as a likable and worthy person. Similarly, we are apt to view a person who doesn't like himself or herself as less likable.

Consequently, an important key to establishing relationships is to have a good self-image. And we should carry that good self-image when we meet and **engage** with people.



Our self-image is the picture we have of ourselves.

Going beyond a Person's Self-Image: Reaching Out

Some people we meet will have a poor self-image, or they may just be shy. In either case, they may tend to be quiet and unenthusiastic. It would be easy for us to read their quiet ways as a sign that they do not have an interest in us or do not like us. But just as we would like others to reach out to us, we should reach out to others. The person with a poor self-image or who is shy may only need someone to extend a hand and offer an enthusiastic "hello" to help him or her begin to feel good and make contact with us. Sure, that person may reject us, but if that happens we can walk away knowing we made a generous effort.

Presenting the Genuine Self: Sticking to Our Values

When we meet a stranger or spend time with someone we do not know well, some of us may want to present ourselves as having no faults or as perfect. We want to be someone that this stranger will like. Of course, that is a natural desire.

Because we meet people in different **contexts**, or situations, we do need to select the side of ourselves that we show. For example, in a job interview, we wouldn't want to show our very playful side or the side of us that likes to sing and dance. On a first date, we probably do not want to reveal our innermost secrets. There is a time and a place for everything.



On a first date, we probably do not want to reveal our innermost secrets.

But we will put ourselves in a difficult position if we present a false side of ourselves. Imagine that you meet someone you find attractive. You notice he or she is quiet and doesn't talk much. Although you are out-going and talkative, you present yourself as quiet and a person of few words. You may make friends with him or her, but do you want to continue the relationship as someone you are not?

Once we present a false self, we may find it difficult to ever present our true self. We may feel that we've promised to be a certain kind of person and now we have to stay that person. If we present our **genuine** self, or our *real* self, we won't have to play a role.

One of the most important characteristics people look for when establishing relationships is **trust**. When we feel that a person is not showing us a true self, we are not likely to trust that person. And we are not likely, therefore, to pursue a friendship.

A good way to make sure of presenting our genuine self to others is to stick to our **values**. Values are the rules for behavior in which we believe. Values are the ideas and beliefs we hold dear. We violate ourselves when we lie about our values so others will like us.

When we show a true side of ourselves to a stranger, he or she may decide not to pursue a deeper relationship with us. Don't be offended—don't take it personally. That person just has different needs than we can fulfill.

Communication: The Way We Connect to Others

We connect with others through **communication**. Communication is any behavior that sends a message to another person. Many of us take communication skills for granted. We view them in the same way we view walking or riding a bicycle. Once we've learned how to walk or bike, we don't spend much time learning to do it better.

Similarly, we may assume that the way we communicate is just fine and doesn't need to be examined or improved. But how we communicate with



If you talk on the phone or write a letter, you are verbally communicating.

others will determine the kind of connection we make with them. If we communicate poorly, we may have a difficult time making and maintaining good friendships. If, however, we learn to communicate well, our friendships and our day-to-day interactions are likely to go smoothly and bring us contentment.

When we think about communication, we may only think about **verbal communication**. Verbal communication uses written or spoken words. If you talk on the phone or write a letter, you are verbally communicating.

Communication also includes **nonverbal communication**. Two friends may not talk for many minutes while sitting across from one another during lunch. But they communicate nonverbally through the relaxed look on their faces and the constant eye contact they make with one another. They are communicating to one another without actually talking. Silently, they are saying to one another, "I like you," and "I can be myself when I'm with you."

Verbal Communication: Building Bridges with Words

Think of the words we say and write to others as some of the building material for a bridge that connects us to the world. Some words and groups of words will help build stable and healthy bridges. Other words and groups of words will build weak or unhealthy bridges between us and others.

The most important rule to remember when speaking is this: We talk to be understood, not to hear the sound of our voices. So when we meet



If you are speaking with a child, use words the child can understand.

someone or talk with a friend, consider who that person is. If you are speaking with a child, use words the child can understand. Even if you are speaking with a friend or peer, do not use words that are unnecessarily difficult or unfamiliar.

Don't choose *extreme* words just to be showy. Extreme words include *hate*, *love*, *incredible*, *fantastic*, *worst*, and *best*. Do we really mean "I hate mustard on my sandwich," or do we mean "I don't like the way this sandwich tastes with mustard on it"? Do we *hate* that person or just dislike him or her? Do we *love* the girl or boy we've dated for two weeks, or do we like him or her? If we choose the wrong words or use extreme words to describe all of our emotions and experiences, then what words can we use when we *really* hate or love someone or something? How can others take our communication seriously when we don't carefully consider our own communication?

Be unique when you speak. Most of us want to be known as unique individuals. But listen carefully to your own conversation and ask yourself: Whose words are these? Do you often use the popular expressions that everyone uses? An expression that was popular such as *awesome* has little meaning. "Awesome" can be used to describe almost everything. Always relying on popular expressions is a careless way to speak.

Listen to the volume and tone of your voice. Do you mean to speak so loudly or so softly? Do you mean to speak with **sarcasm** or a negative tone? Some people always have a sharp edge in their voice. It has become a habit they may not even be aware of. Remain aware of the tone and volume you use.

Nonverbal Communication: Communicating without Words

Some social scientists believe that only about a third of all communication is done with words. The other two-thirds is nonverbal. Nonverbal communication is done with the body, often called **body language**.

Body Language. Our eyes are often the most important part of our body language. When others keep eye contact with us as we speak, we feel that they are listening with interest. On the other hand, we will not believe we



What we look at indicates what we are paying attention to.

have someone's attention if his eyes wander about the room. What we look at indicates what we are paying attention to.

Other parts of our face also play an important part in nonverbal communication. A raised eyebrow can make someone feel that we are judging her comments even before she finishes talking. A sneer or pursed lips tells someone we disagree.



A sneer or pursed lips tells someone we disagree.

In a casual conversation, you can show your interest by keeping your face relaxed. If the subject is not overly serious, a slight smile tells the speaker you are listening and accepting what he is saying. Listen carefully to what someone says.



A slight smile tells the speaker you are listening and accepting what he is saying.

Standing tall and using good posture tells someone that you are interested in what she is saying. When we slouch, we convey a lack of energy and an uninterested attitude.

Don't cross your arms or legs. Either position tells the speaker we are not open to his comments. Hold them in an open and relaxed way. Hold back any judgment until you're sure you understand the speaker's point. There's always time to disagree when the speaker is finished.

Verbal and nonverbal messages should match. If we say to someone, "Sure, I'd love to come," while our eyes are cast down and our lips are pursed, we are sending a **mixed message**. Our speech has said one thing, and our body has said another. Mixed messages are not honest. They often indicate a lack of confidence—we are afraid to say what we really mean.

Body Space. Each of us has a distance we like to keep between ourselves and others. Often this distance is determined by our culture. For example, most Americans keep about 19 inches, or just about arm's length, between themselves and family members or very close friends. When Americans speak to friends, they keep from two to three feet between themselves. When Americans speak to a boss or a teacher, they keep a distance of about 3 ½ feet or more.

In Latin American countries, people often stand much closer when they speak. They also touch one another during conversations much more than Americans do. The English, on the other hand, keep farther apart than Americans when they talk.

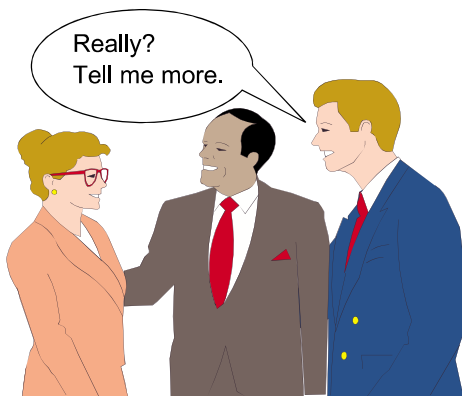
When we speak to others, we can put them at ease by respecting their body space. Don't crowd someone. Recognize when you've gotten too close and entered someone's body space. Standing too far away can also make someone uncomfortable. Imagine your best friend's reaction if you were to stand five feet away during a long and intimate talk.



Standing too far away can also make someone uncomfortable.

Listening: The Most Difficult Communication Skill

Listening is the most difficult of all the communication skills. When others speak, it is easy for us to become distracted and not really hear the words they are saying. Sometimes we begin to think about what we are going to say before the other person finishes. Sometimes we judge what the other person is saying, rather than listening.



These phrases show our interest and willingness to listen.

There are two ways to listen effectively. When we practice *passive listening*, we use phrases such as *Really?* or *Tell me more*, or *No kidding?* These phrases show our interest and willingness to listen.

When we use *active listening*, we interact with the speaker. We may repeat what we've heard to be sure we're receiving the right message. We may ask questions about something the speaker has said.

Whether we're listening passively or actively, the most important practice is to concentrate on what is being said. We not only listen to the words, but we also listen to the feelings behind the words. Is the speaker talking about her trip with joy or sadness in her voice? Is the speaker criticizing school policy with heartfelt emotion in his voice and on his face?

To listen well, we should follow three guidelines.

1. We should listen carefully to the words being said.
2. We should listen to the emotions behind the words.
3. We should hold back our own agreement or disagreement until we are sure we understand the speaker fully and the speaker is ready to **give up the floor**, or has finished talking.

Tips for Effective Communication: Be Interested and Be Fair

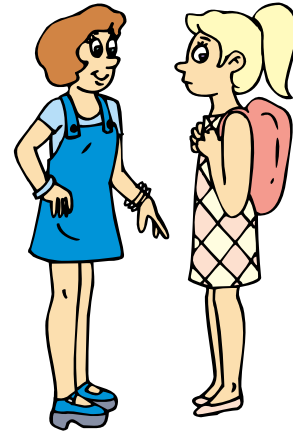
We've all been in conversations in which the other person constantly interrupted us. Each time he interrupted us, he changed the subject to something of his interest. He was unwilling to give up the floor and let us or anyone else speak. He hogged the conversation. When he did comment on our subject, he was sarcastic and negative. This conversation was not satisfying. In fact it was just frustrating. The following are some tips for effective communication. A good conversationalist is the person others are glad to see ... and talk to!

- Don't interrupt the person speaking; wait your turn to speak.
- When you do speak, use the names of the other people. They will feel included in your conversation, and they will pay attention.
- Keep your focus on the subject. Don't change the subject until you are sure everyone is through commenting on it.
- Find a common interest by listening to the speaker.
- Ask questions! You can show your interest and learn from others by asking questions.
- Don't hog the floor. Ask your question or make your point and then give up the floor to another speaker.

Levels of Communication: Showing More and More of Ourselves to Others

To communicate effectively, we need to choose our words thoughtfully, use body language that matches our words, and listen carefully. But communication not only involves how we communicate, but how deeply we communicate.

When we meet a classmate for the first time, we probably will not tell him our innermost secrets. If we don't feel at ease with that classmate, we will not share very many of our ideas or feelings. However, if we grow more comfortable with that classmate, the relationship will develop. The deeper their relationship grows, the more each person will reveal to the other. The more each person trusts the other, the more each person will make herself vulnerable, or open to rejection.



We probably will not reveal our innermost secrets when we first meet.

People can communicate on five different levels.

1. acknowledging
2. reporting
3. sharing
4. revealing
5. communing

The deeper the level of communication, the more **self-disclosure**, or telling about ourselves, takes place.

1. Acknowledging: Small Talk

Acknowledging is the shallowest level of communication. We disclose very little or none of ourselves during acknowledging. Acknowledging is made up of small talk and pleasantries. We've all heard the expressions,

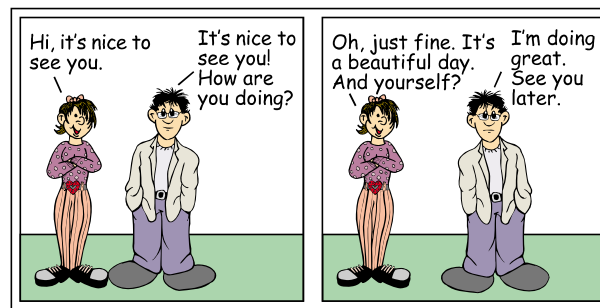
questions, and answers used in small talk. In the following example, Jill and Rueben's exchange is a typical example of small talk.

Jill: "Hi, it's nice to see you."

Rueben: "It's nice to see you! How are you doing?"

Jill: "Oh, just fine. It's a beautiful day. And yourself?"

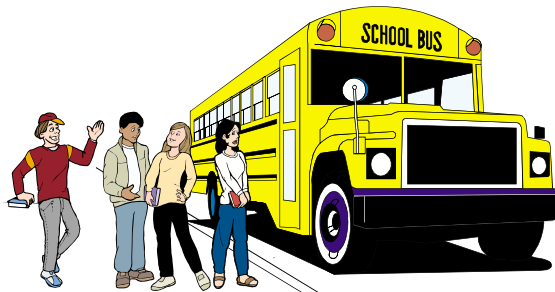
Rueben: "I'm doing great. See you later."



Neither Jill nor Rueben have revealed anything about themselves. They have, however, made each other's day just a little more pleasant. Rather than ignore each other, they have acknowledged each other's existence.

Acknowledging is used by even close friends as they pass quickly in the school halls. They haven't time to talk, or they haven't anything to say, but they want to make contact with one another.

Acknowledging may be the only level on which **acquaintances** speak. Acquaintances include those people we have met but with whom we have not established a friendship. We may like these people, but for one reason or another, we have not spent much time with them. Acquaintances can include the people we chat with at the bus stop a few mornings a week. They can include classmates we see but do not really know. We may have good feelings towards our acquaintances, but we would not call on an acquaintance to help us fix a car or to take a weekend trip.



Acquaintances can include the people we chat with at the bus stop a few mornings a week.

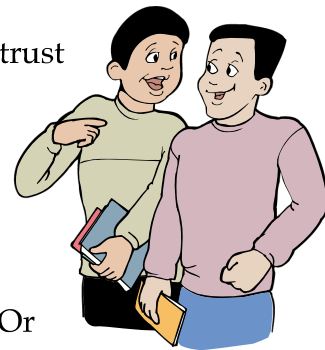
2. Reporting: Just the Facts

During reporting, two people report something to each other. They may report a fact, such as “There is a big concert in town next month.” Or they may report something they heard: “I heard the test is super hard!” Similar to acknowledging, during reporting, neither person reveals anything personal.

If they feel comfortable enough with one another, acquaintances may talk on the reporting level. Acquaintances, however, usually don’t move beyond this level.

3. Sharing: Talk between Friends

When two people enjoy a good **rapport**, they feel a trust and a connection between them. When people feel rapport, they are willing to communicate on the sharing level. During sharing, friends talk about their ideas and judgments. They may comment on events that occurred in school or in the world, as in the following examples: “I think the teacher was right to say that to James in front of the class.” Or “I do (or don’t) think the United States should get involved in a foreign problem.”



When people feel rapport, they are willing to communicate.

When friends share something they think, they risk rejection—their idea may be put down. If so, they may not share anything further. If a friend agrees with our idea, or if she disagrees in a respectful way, then we will be comfortable sharing more of our ideas. We will also feel comfortable moving to the next level of communication.

4. Revealing: Expressing Emotion

During the level of communication called *revealing*, we tell our feelings to a friend. Having our ideas rejected is not as painful as having our feelings rejected. Therefore, friends will not move from the sharing level to the revealing level unless they trust one another. “I’m really afraid of graduating and losing my friends” is an example of revealing. Or “I feel so left out when you don’t invite me to the movies.”

5. Communing: The Ultimate Experience between Friends

Communing, or *intimate sharing*, occurs only between the closest friends. When we walk with a close friend in the woods and feel serene and confident, we are communing. When we feel good just to have a friend sit in the same room as we read a book, we are communing.

Moving between Levels of Communication

Many of our relationships are like the waters in a river—they rise and fall. We may reach the sharing level with a friend for a few years and then drop back to the level of reporting. Or we may stay at the revealing level for a long time before moving to the communing level.

Sometimes we may meet someone and move through the levels of communication quickly. But most healthy relationships that last a long time move slowly. A deep trust between people does not develop easily. Sometimes we reveal ourselves to others only to soon discover that we've been too anxious to develop a deep friendship. Patience is almost always the best strategy in developing deep friendships.



Intimate sharing occurs only between the closest friends.

Characteristics of Friendship and Healthy Relationships: Sharing Trust, Affection, Respect, and Disagreements

Trust: The #1 Ingredient in a Friendship

Some people believe that having similar interests is the key to a friendship. In fact, most social scientists claim that trust is the most important feature of a friendship. We need to believe that a person will not betray our confidences. We need to believe that a person will not tell others our innermost thoughts and that a person will not take advantage of us when we reveal ourselves. When a friend violates our trust, the friendship is hurt and may even end.

Affection: Sharing Joy and Sorrow

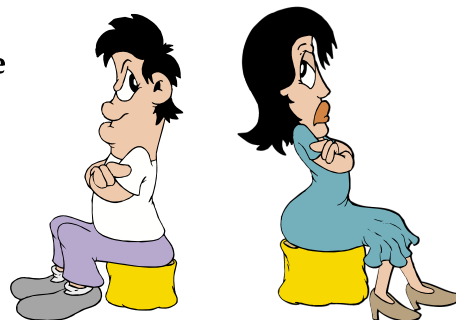
Affection is another important characteristic of a friendship. Friends share each other's joys and sorrows. They show a caring attitude towards each other. Affection can be shown in different ways. Some people feel comfortable hugging one another or being in close contact. Other people show affection through words or even gifts.

Respect: Friends Make Friends Feel Important

Friends make one another feel important. In other words, they bolster each other's self-image and *self-esteem*. When Eric lost the election, Yolanda pointed out how many people had supported him. While Carol described her problems, Fiona listened attentively. And when Juan made the varsity basketball team, his friends told him how hard he had worked and how much he deserved his success. As these examples illustrate, friends are a support system.

Disagreements: Friends Agree to Disagree

Friends let each other have their own ideas. In most friendships, people will sometimes disagree with one another. Friendships can survive disagreements. However, friendships probably will not survive if one of the persons cannot let the other have a different opinion or different belief.



Some types of disagreements may mean that two people cannot be close friends.

Some types of disagreements may mean that two people cannot be close friends. Each of us has deep-rooted values and shallow-rooted values. When plants or trees are deep-rooted, they are difficult to pull out. When our values are deep-rooted, they are very important to us. They may be an essential part of who we are.

Marie and Jackie liked each other when they met. They differed, however, about the importance of who they chose to hang around with at school. Marie believed they should not hang around with people who use drugs. Jackie believed they could be friends with them since neither Marie nor she was interested in using drugs. Each girl felt strongly about her position. In spite of their differences, the two girls continued to respect one another and became friends. However, because their different values, opinions, and beliefs concerning this were too opposing and deep-rooted, the two girls never became close friends. Other people may become good friends or even close friends in spite of their different values or deep-rooted beliefs.

Communicating through Behavior: Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive

Certain kinds of behavior help to make a relationship healthy and grow. Behavior that is an expression of what someone feels and thinks strengthens the bond between two people. This kind of behavior is called **assertive**.

On the other hand, **passive** behavior masks what a person feels or thinks. **Aggressive** behavior threatens or hurts others. Both of these behaviors are destructive to a relationship.

Passive Behavior: Holding Back

When we behave passively, we are having trouble communicating. We lack self-confidence, and we fear the other person's responses to us. Instead of saying what we mean, we say nothing. We use passive nonverbal behavior when we are with another person. We look away from the person; we may giggle or laugh at a serious topic; we tighten our facial muscles and look meek.

The person who behaves passively often shows it in the following ways. He criticizes himself often and easily. He makes unnecessary apologies, even when he is clearly not to blame. He makes constant excuses for things he does, even when he does things well.

Aggressive Behavior: Striking Out at the World

When we behave aggressively, we are also having trouble communicating. Rather than not expressing our thoughts and feelings, we express them in hurtful ways. We use words to be disrespectful of others. We use name-calling to put others down. We interrupt others and do not follow the tips for effective conversation. We use a loud voice and make sarcastic comments about others. “You’re stupid and crazy!” the aggressive person says when he disagrees with someone.

We also use our bodies aggressively. We glare at others and use threatening hand gestures. We stand in a rigid and threatening posture.



When we behave aggressively, we are also having trouble communicating.

Assertive Behavior: The Comfortable Person Making Others Comfortable

When we behave assertively, we tell others how we think and feel. We express ourselves honestly but in a way that considers the other person’s feelings. “I see your point, but I see it in a different way,” the assertive person may say when she disagrees. Her confidence does not make others feel threatened. When we behave assertively, we use our bodies in a relaxed way. Our posture is straight but not stiff. Our face is relaxed, and we make soft eye contact. Our hands are open. Our words and our bodies encourage others to be honest and open with us.

Resolving Conflicts: Mending Differences

No matter how well we communicate and behave with others, we will still have **conflicts**. A conflict is a struggle or a disagreement between people. A conflict can exist over ideas or values. You believe the government should ban the sale of most handguns. Your friend believes the government should not limit the sale of guns. A conflict can be about the gap between what you want from someone and what someone gives you. You’ve asked your little sister to keep the bathroom you share clean. She has rarely done this. A conflict can even arise over something as simple as which restaurant you and your dating partner will go to after a movie.

Some people believe that good relationships have no conflicts. This is rarely the case. More often, people just avoid talking about the differences and gaps between them. They are afraid that talking about a conflict will just create tension and hard feelings. But learning how to address conflicts can make a relationship much healthier than ignoring conflicts. How healthy is a relationship in which both people are afraid of their differences? Having to be in agreement, or pretend to be in agreement, can be a heavy weight for any of us to carry.

Strategies to Avoid When a Conflict Arises

People use different kinds of strategies to deal with conflicts. Unfortunately, many of them only create more problems.

Withdrawal and the *silent treatment* are two passive ways of responding to a conflict.

During *withdrawal*, the person just walks away and refuses to face the problem. During the *silent treatment* a person just stops speaking. She may remain silent or may say just enough to answer a question. She does not, however, really communicate.



Withdrawal and the silent treatment are two passive ways of responding to a conflict.



The assertive person is not afraid to raise and talk about differences.

On the other hand, some people use the aggressive approach: They yell and scream. They do not want to resolve, or fix, the conflict. Instead, the person who blows up wants to bully the other person into giving in.

The assertive approach is always the best way to resolve conflicts. The assertive person is not afraid to raise and talk about differences. He knows conflict can be discussed in a mature way. Even if his emotions run hot, he will not use hurtful words or threatening body language.

A **confrontation** is a meeting in which people express their differences or complaints to one another. They try to resolve a conflict.

The following are some tips for being assertive during confrontations:

Use I messages. Phrase your conflict or emotion as something you believe or feel. Say “I was hurt and angry when you didn’t keep our date,” rather than “You hurt me when you didn’t call.” Say “I think we should go to a movie,” rather than “Your choice to go to a restaurant is not a good one.”

“I” messages help you take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings. Try to avoid statements that begin with “you.” Those types of statements do *not* take responsibility.

Focus on the conflict. At the beginning of the discussion, both people need to agree on what the conflict is. If the disagreement is about the way one of you behaved at a party, focus on that. Do not use this discussion to raise other issues or disagreements. Too often people use an argument to raise many other problems. This only confuses the issue.

Be specific and be direct. Know what you want to say and say it in plain language.

Look to solve the conflict. An assertive person looks to find an answer that will satisfy both people. Perhaps each person needs to suggest possible solutions.

Remember: the goal is to solve the conflict, not win the argument. Both people may need to compromise or be willing to give in a little. Perhaps you could let your friend choose this week’s movie and you choose next week’s movie. Perhaps you can begin to see how both of you caused hurt feelings.

Be willing to end the conflict. Don’t stop discussing the conflict until both of you are satisfied. But once the conflict is ended, do not raise it again. It is over.

When Relationships Hurt

Sometimes we will find ourselves in a relationship that hurts. The other person may be abusing us in one of many ways. We may be a victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or even emotional abuse. Each of us is protected by law and we can take steps to protect ourselves.

Child Abuse: The Illegal Treatment of Children or Adolescents

Child abuse is the illegal treatment of children or adolescents. The statistics on child abuse are staggering. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, each day in the United States, more than three children die as a result of child abuse in the home. More children, ages four and younger, die from child abuse and neglect than any other single, leading cause of death. About three million possible maltreatment reports are made to child protective service agencies each year. Actual abuse and neglect is estimated to be three times greater than reported.

In most cases, the person who commits the abuse is the parent, step-parent, sibling, or immediate family member. The law protects children and adolescents from four different kinds of maltreatment: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse.

Physical abuse. People who cannot handle their frustrations or anger may resort to physically abusing others. Some parents beat their children to relieve their anger. Some parents beat their children because they do not know how to discipline them in appropriate ways.

Child abuse does not include all kinds of physical force a parent uses on a child. Some parents use mild force such as spanking or even light slapping to discipline a child. However, when a parent harms a child or an adolescent, then the parent is committing child abuse. Bruising or burning a child is child abuse. Knocking out teeth or breaking a bone is child abuse. Using dangerous objects with which to beat a child is also child abuse.

Sexual abuse. Sexual abuse describes any sexual relations between an adult and a child or an adolescent. The sexual relations can be anything from fondling to sexual intercourse. Even if a child agrees to sexual relations with an adult, the adult is still committing a crime, and the child is still suffering.

Neglect. Another form of child abuse is called *neglect*. Neglect occurs when parents do not adequately care for a child's or an adolescent's physical or emotional needs. (Physical needs include adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care.) They may not feed or clothe the child well. They may even tie the child up or lock the child in a room for a long period of time. Leaving a young child alone or unsupervised is another form of neglect. Emotional neglect may include indifference or refusing to listen when a child has a problem.

Emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that attacks a child's or an adolescent's emotional development and self-worth. Emotional abuse does not leave scars or marks, but it can be as harmful as any other kind of child abuse. When parents relate to children in harmful ways, they are committing emotional abuse. Emotional abuse includes withholding love from a child, providing little or no emotional support for a child, and constantly ridiculing a child.

Even though the effects of emotional abuse are not as visible as those of physical abuse, emotional abuse can be just as damaging. One of the worst effects of emotional abuse is low self-esteem.

Abuse: Person to Person

Abuse can happen in all kinds of relationships. Husbands beat wives, and in some cases wives beat husbands. Almost half of the women murdered in this country are killed by their husband or boyfriend. Anyone can be the victim of physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse from a dating partner, an acquaintance, a stranger, or even someone who is considered a friend. Abuse is abuse—no matter who is committing the abuse!

Who Is Likely to Commit Abuse?

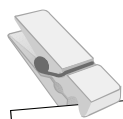
Certain people are more likely to commit abuse than others. Abuse can be a learned behavior. Persons who came from abusive families are more likely to abuse their children and spouses than persons who came from healthy and loving families. A child who was physically or sexually abused may become a parent who abuses his or her children. A child who grew up watching his father beat his mother is likely to beat his own wife. Abuse is a disease, and it can be passed on from parent to child.

People who commit abuse are likely to have low self-esteem. They do not value themselves highly. They are easily frustrated and can't handle stress. They abuse others as a way to feel powerful and in control. They are also likely to be an alcoholic or have another drug problem.

Who Is Likely to Accept Abuse?

Anyone can be abused. But some people believe that they deserve to be abused. If they are adults, they most likely were abused as children. They see the present abuse they are experiencing as just a continuation of their childhood abuse. Abused children or adults usually have low self-esteem. Because they see themselves as lacking value, they may believe they deserve to be abused.

Responding to Abuse: Stopping the Cycle



National Child Abuse
Hotline
24 Hours a Day
Toll Free
1-800-4-A-CHILD
(1-800-422-4453)

National Coalition Against
Domestic Violence
1-800-799-SAFE
(1-800-799-7233)

If you are abused, you need to end the cycle right now! Begin by notifying a hotline that will help you stop the abuse. If you are a victim of child abuse, or if you suspect a friend of being abused, talk to your teacher or guidance counselor, or call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453). If one of your parents is abusing the other, or if a friend is being abused by a dating partner, call the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233), or use the TDD number for the hearing impaired (1-800-787-3224). You should also contact your school

counselor and visit your local health center. If you would rather not call a hotline or talk to a counselor, then reach out and talk to a friend or a close relative. For immediate help, call 911 directly.

These hotlines, counselors, and health centers will help you take action to stop the abuse. They will also help you begin your recovery. Remember: Anyone who has been abused is likely to abuse someone in the future or to be a victim of abuse in the future. Victims need to learn how to avoid abuse in the future.

If you find someone attempting to abuse you—in the home, at school, on a date, or anywhere—assert yourself. Say “No!” to the person who is attempting to abuse you. Many people who attempt to abuse others look for victims who will not or cannot stand up for themselves. So be assertive! Think of your body and your feelings as worthy and as deserving of respect from others. Try to avoid being alone with people you have seen being abusive or you suspect are capable of abusive behavior. But, if you are abused, it’s a crime and you are a victim. Get help!

Summary

As social creatures, we enjoy and need relationships. Relationships fulfill our need to love and be loved, and to feel accepted by others. Our relationships also enrich our lives as we discover how others see the world and we hear about their experiences and knowledge.

Establishing relationships can be difficult. Many of us fear being rejected by others if we attempt to make friends. If we develop a healthy *self-image*, we are less likely to be rejected. Others tend to see us as we see ourselves. When we establish relationships, we may try to present the self we think the other person will like and accept. However, we should show others a *genuine*, or real and honest, self. If we present a fake or perfect self, we may feel the need to play that *role* in the future.



Relationships fulfill our need to love and be loved, and to feel accepted by others.

To establish and develop healthy relationships, we need to communicate well. We often take our ability to communicate for granted, but we shouldn’t. *Communication* is a learned skill. There are two different types of communication: *verbal* and *nonverbal*. Verbal communication describes messages sent by the written or spoken word. Nonverbal communication messages are sent by facial expressions or body movements. Verbal and nonverbal messages should match or we will send *mixed messages* to others.

Listening is probably the most difficult communication skill to learn and practice. As we listen to others, we should have a clear mind focused on what is being said. We should let the speaker know that we are listening. And we should wait until the speaker is done before we respond.

Acknowledging, reporting, sharing, revealing, and communing are the five levels of communication. Acknowledging, or showing others you recognize them, and reporting, or telling others facts, are the shallowest levels of communication. Acquaintances usually speak on these levels. Friends, however, will also share ideas, reveal feelings, and commune, or feel totally at ease and deeply connected to one another.

Friends can *disclose* themselves to one another because they *trust* one another. They also show affection and respect for one another. They let each other have different opinions and ideas. Because they can be *assertive* with one another, they are able to resolve *conflicts* in ways that are agreeable to both persons.

Some relationships are not healthy and cause hurt. Child abuse occurs when an adult hurts a child or an adolescent. Child abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse. The law protects children and adolescents from these abuses.

Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse can also occur in relationships between one child and another, and between one adult and another. No one should permit another person to abuse him or her. There are hotlines which any person who is abused or who commits abuse can call for help.