

RELATIONSHIPS: THE ART OF FOSTERING CONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIPS

Roger Walsh

The following are some principles that can be very valuable for enhancing and fostering conscious relationships.

Commit Your Relationship to Learning and Awakening

Make an explicit agreement and intention to use the relationship to serve your mutual learning, growth, and awakening.

Commit Yourself and the Relationship to a Larger Purpose

Make an agreement to use the relationship for a purpose larger than your individual or combined wellbeing

e.g. to share love with others, to foster your ability to help, heal and teach, etc.

This kind of agreement is important because meaning comes from relating to something larger than oneself, or even than the relationship.

Agree to Ask for Help, and to Offer It When Requested

One of the beauties of relationship is knowing that help is available when we are caught in painful circumstances or patterns. However, often we feel too vulnerable to ask for help at the times we need it most.

Therefore it is helpful to agree, before difficulties hit, to ask for help at difficult times. You can ask for help from each other, from within, from a higher source, and from a shared higher source.

Asking in these ways can be a gift to both people since it usually speeds resolution, and also gives permission to the other person to ask for help when needed.

Agree to Offer and Accept Feedback

Give permission and encouragement to each other to give feedback about any behavior that appears unhealthy or unhelpful.

Balance this by acknowledging and expressing gratitude for healthy helpful behavior. Healthy relationships have at least a 5:1 ratio of positive to difficult interactions.

Allow Yourself to Play Multiple Roles

A healthy person is a flexible one who is comfortable playing diverse roles as the occasion demands. Likewise for relationships. Relationships are healthiest, most comfortable, and most enjoyable, when both partners are comfortable playing multiple roles—helper or helped, playful or serious, active or passive, wise or foolish. If one

person *has* to be, say, the helper, then the other person *has* to be helped, which limits both people.

Share a Growth Practice

If possible, share a growth practice that you can do both separately and together.
e.g. dream work, meditation, yoga, prayer, etc.

Have an Agreed On Emergency Technique

Agree on a technique or practice that you will do together during times of relationship stress in order to heal the relationship and each other as quickly as possible.
e.g. breathing, prayer, meditation, etc.

At such times, the person who first recognizes the danger to the relationship has permission and a responsibility to request that both people halt whatever you are doing and do the practice together.

Commit to Conscious Truth telling

Make a commitment to conscious truth telling. i.e. commit to telling the truth about your experience (which is the only thing you can really know or tell the truth about) as helpfully and skillfully as you can.

This means no withholding and also no misuse of the truth.

This is one of the most powerful techniques for deepening relationships that I know.

An Advanced Truth telling Exercise

The following exercise is exceptionally powerful and can be very helpful if used skillfully in a relationship of deep trust and commitment to each other and to truth. However, it is definitely not for everyone!

Sit together making eye contact

Person A says: "For the next 10 minutes, if any thoughts, feelings, memories or experiences come to mind that would be difficult to communicate, please communicate them.

Person A simply listens as openly and acceptingly as possible while person B communicates

At the end of 10 minutes, take time to share any feelings or reactions that arose in response to the exercise

Reverse roles

May your relationships be a source of learning, love, and joy for you and for all those whose lives you touch.

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