

5 ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR A HAPPY RELATIONSHIP

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THANKS FOR SHARING IT WITH YOUR FRIENDS!

SKILL 1

THE TOP SIX PREDICTORS OF A LONG-LASTING RELATIONSHIP

FREQUENT DEEP, HONEST COMMUNICATION:

Verify how the other person feels about the relationship OFTEN. Ask, ask and ask! Without asking, you will assume that everything is OK, when it is not.

OPENNESS TO ACCEPT OUR OWN MISTAKES:

Both sides know that they could eventually be wrong, regardless their perceptions, and thus they are open to verification of assertions. And, of course, both know how to apologize graciously.

ACCEPT THE DIFFERENCES:

There are many differences. What used to marvel you in the beginning, that the other was so different from your own experiences, is now a source of irritation. STOP, and remember that you are in a relationship exactly because the differences were exciting and a source of learning. Think of the differences as assets and always ask: "Do you have a different opinion?", before proceeding to implement a joint decision.

CULTIVATE YOUR INTERESTS:

Don't think that you have only to pursue shared interests. Having your own pet hobbies will give you a different take on reality, from which you can share your learning with the other person.

GO THE EXTRA MILE:

If something is required from you, at the home or elsewhere in the relationship, just deliver promptly and with a smile. Doing something extra builds a lot of good will for the future.

HUMOR:

Don't take yourself too seriously; you are only a little bit of the universe, and looking at yourself in this context is humbling. However, be certain that you are faithful to your life mission.

SKILL 2

PRACTICAL TIPS TO FOLLOW IF THERE IS TOO MUCH ANGER IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

When there is anger, most likely it was there before a buildup of negative reactions. Things are said, probably with best intentions, but incomplete or ill-explained, which create a negative perception.

We are so busy that we have not the time or the skills to measure every day how our relationship is doing. We let it go in automatic pilot and then get utterly surprised when things blow up in our faces.

Anyhow, if there is anger, both partners are in a difficult situation. If you have not agreed beforehand on how to restore the relationship when the fight happens, you need to be creative:

- 1) Avoid ignoring the situation, because even when convenient, silence is the most damaging thing you can do!

You add insult to injury in this way, and send the message that you want to ignore the other person's pain.

2) It doesn't matter any longer who is right or wrong on the disputed issue, you need now to bridge the gap by apologizing.

3) If you don't dare to speak then send a mail message, try a phone call, or leave a post card on your partner's side of the bed. Bringing flowers or playing music are good ideas also.

4) Redouble your efforts to perceive the hurt of both sides under the anger: What is hurting you now? What are the needs unsolved that prompted the fight? What are your partner's unsolved needs?

5) Next time, try to have a conversation when both sides are at peace and contented. The idea is to learn from the experience: What needs caused the explosion? How can we check the level of needs before people feel so aggravated as to need to fight? What ways of communication can be included? How often do we need to check needs/anger build up?

6) Plan for the next fight, learning how to do fair fighting. This is a wonderful way to confront without anger or resentment, so both sides are on the same page concerning reciprocal needs. You can read it in Chapter 5 of the Positive Conflicts ebook, at: <http://www.positiveconflicts.com/pcv2>

SKILL 3

THE TOP SIX INDICATORS OF CONFLICT ESCALATION

Escalation is the progressive use of aggressive communication during a fight. It is produced by our perception of the other person's assumed bad intentions, which prompts us to defend ourselves by attacking.

Look out for these signs that your fight or confrontation is posed to escalate more, and remember that NOW is time to do some repair work in order to avoid relationship destruction. Watch out for the following indicators:

- Message is sent that all is wrong, but there is no open confrontation or explanation of discontent
- People sulk, whine, withdraw or explode over small slights
- More detachment and non-involvement than ever
- Escalation of "omission behaviors": more promises forgotten, etc

- Demeaning partner in public by using sarcasm or criticism
- One side withholds important information
- Or hides financial information
- Conversation is impersonal, only about neutral things
- Self-destructive behavior, drinking, drug use, overworking
- Walking out without a word.

SKILL 4

HOW TO BUILD TRUST AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH LISTENING SKILLS

This is a crucial skill, the lack of which can be really damaging for your relationships. A good listener communicates both interest and respect. If we are good listeners, we will avoid jumping in to direct the conversation, or breaking in to make remarks that take the focus away from the person who is talking.

We will avoid being centered in our own thoughts, or let our mind wander or anticipate and block the person from developing his or her own ideas at their own pace.

This is an active process where we try deeply to understand what the other is saying, and why. We let others tell their stories, in their own way, while we attend to the content of the story, but also capture the feelings included in it.

When you listen, you try to take a seat in front of the speaker, maintaining eye contact, and a good posture.

The listener should practice three skills:

1) Using feeling-included responses:

“As I hear you saying, the fact that your boss stole your presentation and used it as his own product, made you feel abused and deceived...”

“It looks to me that John said things to you that made you feel as if he is not interested in you any longer, and also he left you without warning waiting for him at the movies, and it felt to you as if you were abandoned, right?”

2) Watching for (your) behaviors that interfere with good listening:

- Do not offer any advice, or tell what to do. Just listen!
- Do not preach a sermon, now is not the time to say “I told you so” or say “it was your fault”
- Do not interrupt and tell about your own time when you felt the same way! It takes the focus off the other person.

3) If you feel like it, make a summary:

"It appears to me, if I hear you right, that the whole situation of being fired so soon after being hired has left you very confused and unsure what to do for the search for a new job...."

And then, verify:

"Have I understood well what you told me"?

If the answer is "no", then begin from scratch again, up until you get it right, to the satisfaction of the person being listened to.

SKILL 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNITION

This skill focuses on the ability to appreciate the positive aspects of everything. Instead of having a perception of a glass half empty, you instead focus on the "glass half full."

It takes sustained practice, because all of us have been educated with a critical view. If you are an engineer doing a project, this is a very critical skill, because it keeps you apprised of what can go wrong and derail the project.

With people in relationships, it is the other way around. As much as you focus on the negative aspects of your partner and try to begin the project of "improving him or her" the more the other person feels not accepted and evaluated in a negative manner.

You are in a relationship to support and enhance the positive aspects of your partner. In a sense, you have chosen each other because we all want and need someone else who can be for us warts and all; who can accept and appreciate all our aspects. This kind of attitude is generally called love.

Remember that whatever you focus on tends to take center stage: If you focus on a negative trait of your partner, like her tendency to be late for appointments and dates, then this trait will become prevalent and negate the perception of other positive traits that attracted you to her before. So, let's begin:

- Every time you need to talk about some changes needed, begin recollecting the good things done;
- Try to find a positive thing to comment on daily;
- Don't dare to mention negative aspects without talking about the positive ones first;
- If the results are awful, praise the good intentions;
- Be very creative and find unexpected aspects to praise: A busy person that accomplishes everything could be praised for her constant smile, or his good disposition even during the busiest day;

- Don't be mean, don't link praise with immediate critique: "you did well, but forgot this part." In this case, the "but" will cancel the praise. The two propositions don't need to be linked.

CONCLUSION:

Put into practice, the 5 ESSENTIAL SKILLS SET FOR HAPPY RELATIONSHIPS provided here, because they are very effective:

You will see a change in the quality of your relationship, having more trust and pleasure in the company of your loved ones.

If you care to improve the way you feel in the company of others and wish to make other people feel happy with you, this small effort in applying the FIVE ESSENTIAL SKILLS will be very productive.

To your happiness!

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<http://www.positiveconflicts.com/pcv2/>

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