



Relationships *That Last*

Good relationships nourish us. Research shows they boost happiness, improve health and lower stress.

Like flowers, relationships need care to grow. When life gets busy, our relationships may suffer. We may feel we simply don't have the time to spend on our relationships, between working, parenting and running a household. If this sounds familiar, try these tips and watch your relationships thrive:

- **Be proactive.** Don't wait until you have time; make time. Make an appointment in your calendar to spend time with a loved one – and honor that time.
- **Save time.** Running your household wisely can give you more time to spend with your loved ones. To save time, try automating your finances or asking family (or hiring someone) to help with chores. Cooking in large batches (and freezing the rest for later) and using subscription, delivery or pickup services may also help.
- **Run errands together.** The next time you need to run an errand, try taking a family member or friend along. For instance, go to the gym together, visit the farmers' market or take the dog for a walk.
- **Work smarter.** Is work taking over your personal time? Try asking others to help when you can and always have a backup. Remember to set boundaries between work and personal time – and defend those boundaries. Before saying yes to a project, think about whether you can finish it during work hours.
- **Spend time wisely.** Sometimes, we spend a lot of time on things that don't add any real value to our life, such as surfing the Web. Limit those activities and spend that time with your loved ones instead.

Beyond these time management tips, you can also strengthen your bond with your loved ones in other ways:

- **Show gratitude.** When was the last time you told your spouse, "I love you"? Or told a friend how grateful you are for her friendship? Saying thank you can brighten a loved one's day – and the reaction you may get can brighten yours.
- **Makes someone's life better.** Every day, ask yourself what you can do for five minutes to make a loved one's day better. Maybe your spouse is nervous about a big presentation and could use a few kind words. Or a friend is going through a divorce and needs your support.

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- **Reach out often.** Every bit of contact helps to keep a relationship going. If you're really pressed for time, send your loved one a brief message to check in. Or make a quick phone call. Keep in mind that technology can make it easier to connect with our loved ones, but there's nothing quite like meeting in person.
- **Be a good listener.** Want to be a better listener – and a better friend, parent and partner? Avoid interrupting your loved one, trying to top his or her story, giving advice off the bat, becoming defensive, or not giving your loved one your full attention. During a conversation, remember to repeat what someone says every so often, keep eye contact, uncross your arms, lean in – and really listen.
- **Fight smart.** Yes, conflict is a natural part of a relationship. In the strongest relationships, people know how to fight and resolve conflict. The next time things get tense, try these phrases to cool things off:
 - “What can I do to make you feel better?”
 - “Go on.”
 - “I can see my part in this.”
 - “I love you.”
 - “That makes sense.”
 - “Please tell me what’s going on.”
 - “I need some time to calm down so I’ll listen better.”

Start using these tips, and you may see your bond with a loved one grow stronger.

Need help?

Call toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

1-866-EAP-4SOC | 1-866-327-4762

TTY/TDD callers, please dial 1-800-327-0801.

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