

Our Shared Journey

Our Relationships

How Do We Keep Them Healthy?



A Guide to Healthy Relationships

By Mary Francis

Our Shared Journey



Relationships

A Guide to Healthy Relationships (# 3 in trilogy) will help the relationships that mentally and physically block you from happiness.

If you're living completely alone you must learn to use social skills because absolute loneliness is just too hard to bear. Don't hang out with people that drain you, but instead seek out those who inspire you.

Drum up the courage to connect with others and you'll soon find yourself strolling along with a smile or a joyful laugh. Don't hide your loneliness but instead bring it out into the light.

I am not a relationship expert but as a coach I have talked to many people who have struggled with their relationships and their loneliness.

Please seek professional advice if your relationships are causing you so much stress that they are disrupting your quality of life.



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Relationships



How do you relate to the most important people in your life? Ask yourself “Do I get what I need from my relationships?” and “Am I investing enough time and effort in my relationships?”

In each of your relationships you are either contributing to it or not. You help or hinder by teaching others how to treat you. If you really want to change your relationships you must first acknowledge that you alone control both your attitude and actions.



You can't have good, strong relationships until you're willing to know yourself. Your biggest mistake may be in believing that what others offer is more important than what you give yourself. You are all right just as you are and you don't need relationships to fill your needs – instead they should be part of your life because of respect and love, not need.

Having said that, there is always something that can be changed, even in our long term relationships, to make them stronger.

Change Your Attitude – If you only talk about the frustrations of the day, there's a good chance that the relationship will be just a griping session whenever you are together. Instead start a habit of the first five minutes being free of all complaining. Before saying anything else, talk about something positive.

Reassert Your Rights – For your relationship to work you both need to feel valued, appreciated and respected. If that's not happening then it's your responsibility to demand that you are treated with respect. If not than this weak relationship may need to be left behind.

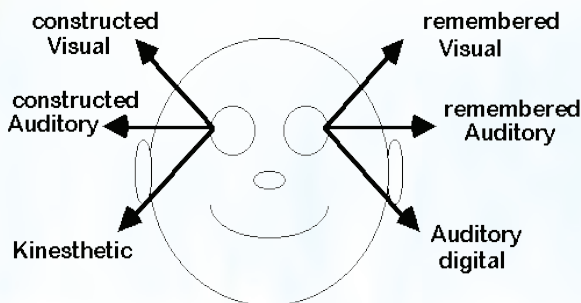
Enjoy Your Time With Them – Make an effort to be “in the moment” when you're with them. Focus on making direct eye contact when [talking](#). The more focused you are, the more you will enjoy each other's company.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming



Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is all about communication style and it is extremely important to understand why your style may be different from someone else's.

If you understand another person's style you will see/hear/feel and figure out why they react the way they do.



Four Communication Styles

Visual – see things as pictures, learns quickly and doesn't like details.
Expressions: I see what you're talking about. I get the picture.

Auditory – learns by listening, tells great stories, talks to themselves.
Expressions: I hear what you're saying. I'll talk to you later.

Kinesthetic – in tune with their feelings, speaks slowly, learns by doing.
Expressions: Let's keep in touch. It feels right to me.

Digital – wants the details, everything to be logical, doesn't like change.
Expressions: I need to figure it out. Can you describe it in detail?

Please take the time to learn more about NLP. It will be worth your effort because there will be less misunderstandings in your relationships when you understand how the different communication styles work.

Books about NLP

“Law of Connection” by Michael J. Losier

“Neuro-Linguistic Programming for Dummies” Ready & Burton

7 Key People We Need



We all have people in our lives that come and go, but they don't always bring any value or commitment. Then there are others that are here for the long haul. They care about us and are willing to hold our hand.



These 7 people will help you get what you need.

A Lifelong Friend – is with you whether you're embarking on a crazy trip, doing serious soul searching or feeling a little sorry for yourself.

Opposite Sex Friend – is a platonic friend that you can be open and real with. Their insight will be helpful when making difficult decisions.

A Financial Advisor – will whip you into financial shape. Gets you to face the truth about your finances and recommends what you need.

A Fitness Friend – gets you off the couch and exercising for fun.

A Doctor You Trust – because this relationship can save your life.

An Older Mentor – empowers you by providing a positive role model.

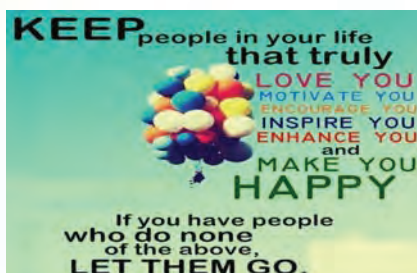
A Dreamer – encourages you to take action towards your dreams.

Almost all the people you meet feel themselves superior to you in some way. A sure way to their hearts is to recognize their importance.

Friendships to Detox



Good friendships have nothing to do with distance, age or sex. They are not based on how long we have known each other, but on how well we connect and understand each other.



With good friends you never have to wonder where you stand. You can tell them anything with the knowledge that they will never belittle you, think less of you or betray your trust. With these friends you never have to worry about being betrayed or being taken for granted.

On the other hand, some [friends](#) just aren't good for us. No matter how hard we try they never seem to give of themselves but instead drain away our joy. When we are down and out they don't seem to notice. It's all about them and there is always some kind of drama when their around. Sometimes we just need to clean house and a bad friend belongs with everything else that's on your give away pile. They take up far more space and time than they deserve. Once you're free of bad friends that space will be available for friendships that serve you better.

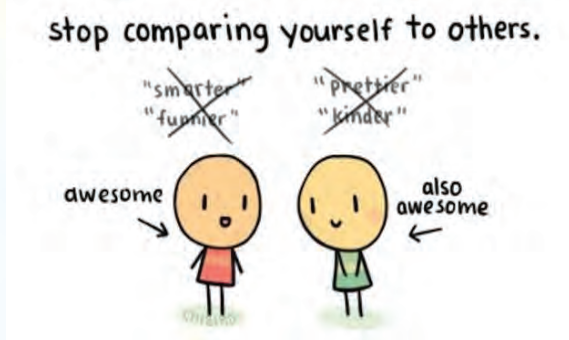
Ask yourself:

- Do I look forward to seeing this friend?
- Is time with this friend a duty or chore?
- Are they truly happy to see me?
- Do they care about what's happening in my life?
- Do they always want something from me?
- Why are they still part of my life?
- Do I trust them completely?

Are You Comparing Yourself?



We all have a side to us that gets a little jealous when someone else gets a break. This doesn't make you a bad person, but you do need to understand what the envy is really about.



Envy usually has a lot to do with how critical we are of ourselves. Make a list of what you admire about yourself and don't stop until you fill the page. Whenever you start comparing yourself, remember how much you have to be proud of.

We seem to need to compare ourselves favorable to others, because then we can at least take unconscious refuge in being better than someone else. Instead of being jealous, use your friends luck to inspire you to enjoy what you have.

We all compare ourselves to others, we just don't realize how often we do it. The good news is that we can trade that comparison for a little empathy and understanding, which brings more joy to our lives.

The problem with comparison is that it kills empathy and we need empathy to earn intimacy and trust. Only by showing compassion for our own weakness can we feel comfortable with others. If you embrace your own imperfections, you will not need to compare yourself to others.

Pay attention – next time you compare, stop and practice empathy.

Self talk – if you make a mistake say “Life happens” and move on.

Ask for help – ask someone you trust to keep you accountable when you start comparing yourself with others.

How to Make Friends



Don't Criticize, Condemn or Complain

Criticism is futile because it puts a person on the defensive and usually makes him strive to justify himself. Criticism is dangerous, because it wounds a person's precious pride, hurts their sense of importance and arouses resentment.

Any fool can criticize, condemn and complain – and most fools do. But it takes character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving.

Instead of condemning people, let's try to understand them. Let's try to figure out why they do what they do and build a relationship of trust.



Give Honest and Sincere Appreciation

The deepest urge in human nature is the desire to be important. The way to develop a friendship is by building trust with appreciation and encouragement. Always be anxious to praise but loath to find fault.

Stay away from flattery as it seldom works with discerning people as it is shallow, selfish, insincere and cheap praise. Honest appreciation gets results where criticism and ridicule fails.

Our decision to be a positive thinking person will not only help us, it will also lift up the people in our lives and inspire them to be better friends.

Pets – Our Greatest Friends



No book on relationships would be complete without talking about the relationships we have with our pets. Some people relate to their pets as if they were part of their families – they share a very strong bond.



They tell their pets everything and before they know it their stress level is down. It comes as no surprise to most people that owning a pet can be good for your health. Studies have shown that pet owners live longer and have fewer illnesses in old age.

How, exactly, do our beloved animals relieve stress? They sustain us the same way great human friendships do - people who have lots of friends tend to be healthier and calmer.

Pets are a very nonthreatening audience, they don't criticize us and they are excellent listeners. If you are having a hard time, just practice telling your pet about it, talk about what went wrong and what your options are for moving forward.

Pets provide unconditional affection and studies show that they seem to understand what their owners are feeling. Instead of coming home to an empty house, you are welcomed eagerly by your dog or cat.

Pets give you a reason to get up in the morning, something to love, touch and nurture. It apparently doesn't matter what kind of pet you have. What matters is the unconditional love that they give us.

It is important to choose a pet suited to your life style. Researchers say that even watching fish in an aquarium can create relaxing and calming feelings.

“Face to Face” Friendships



We are so used to multitasking, that dealing with anyone “face to face” seems like a waste of time, a guilty pleasure that we don’t have time for. But, there’s a cost to not spending “face to face” time with our family and friends.

How can we express our deepest sorrows, hurts and losses online? An online friendship is a friendship, but it may not be a real deep one.

So much of what we feel is revealed in what others see in our actions, facially expressions and tone of voice.



We feel that we must fill our lives with more, always more. We convince ourselves that we really don’t have time to spend “face to face” but the truth is, we can do it if we want to.

We all have busy lives filled with people we don’t want to see and who don’t want to see us. Take time for the friends that you value and don’t try to be everything to everyone. We need to make our friendships a priority because then we listen with not only our ears but also our hearts.

Your interactions with others takes as much time, if not more, than anything else you do. You can greatly increase the efficiency of your interactions by improving the way you communicate.

A major waste of time is caused because people do not know what they should do, how to do it and when it should be done.

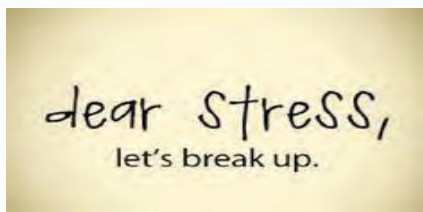
The single most important cause of positive feelings is defined as “knowing exactly what is expected and getting it done.” Friends need to know what is going on and how they fit into the big picture. You can communicate with them at a deeper level when you do it “face to face”.

Family Stress



We all love our families – or do we? No one likes to think of their family members as unkind. But the truth is there are a lot of nasty people in the world and that sometimes includes family.

Unfortunately, we don't pick our families like we do our friends. Generally, when we have hurtful people in our lives the best approach is to walk away from them. The problem with family is that you have history with them and biological ties that make walking away hard.



If they are cruel and are not willing to change than they are probably not willing to listen to anything you have to say. There can be tremendous feelings of guilt and loss when forever walking away from family. Unfortunately, that's what you may have to do.

If you decide that you want to keep in touch, you absolutely must establish firm boundaries as to what you will tolerate from them. Always meet on neutral ground, keep the visit short, have an exit strategy and if necessary have a friend with you.

Forgive them, not for them but for yourself. It doesn't mean that their actions are right or that you accept it. Forgiveness simply means that you're moving on without bitterness in your heart.

You may not get validation from your family but you can get it from yourself. Accept yourself with 100 percent love and if you do that, then they can't hurt you.

What it boils down to is keeping yourself mentally healthy. Use your mind to keep a positive attitude. Don't ever stop learning because education adds value to life. There are lots of opportunities for learning so you can grow strong, even if you have to do it alone.

Getting Unstuck



Does what you're doing feel right? Does it fill you with joy or drain the life out of you? Are you doing what others want and just being part of the crowd? This is your life; not your parents, friends or the people you work with.



There is more to relationships than what you see on the surface. Relationships support you when life is unbalanced and you can't see yourself ever being happy again. Good relationships are there to help you [get unstuck](#) so you can find your passion, conquer your fears and best of all be your own person.

One way to get unstuck is to find an organization or cause you believe in wholeheartedly. You can commit time, energy and ingenuity to it, but the best thing will be the new relationships that you make.

Another approach is to take some friends and do the one thing that you think you cannot do. Fail and try again, being better as you do it a second time. There's nothing more fun than getting together with close friends and laughter is a sure way to get unstuck.

Lastly, get unstuck in your relationships by giving thanks for what you do have. Be thankful for the things you absolutely wouldn't change about your friends and family. Then take your gratitude a step further and offer the gift of friendship to someone who needs it.

Let's Not Argue



We often overestimate the degree that others understand us. Rather than making assumptions, we need to seek clarification – even to ask straight out “What are your intentions?” They might not realize how their tone sounds or how their gestures are seen. Be willing to take the first step in opening up the conversation; take a deep breath and try to recognize that they may also be feeling anxiety.

When stakes are high, you can keep the tension down by letting them have their say first. Acknowledging their feelings and letting them win a few points will go a long way towards getting them to be more open.

Sometimes a dispute runs so deep that talking about it just doesn’t help. In this case, get a third person to be neutral and to mediate a solution.

Look beneath each person’s position to what their real interests are. There are other choices and if you don’t get too worked up you will be able to see them. In a relationship it’s important to think: “What is really going on here?” Once you shift your focus away from yourself and towards the other person, you have made room for empathy and compassion.

If your goal is to win then you’re more apt to ignore or trample on their feelings. Wanting to win is natural but it can be disastrous to your relationship. Winning can make you feel safe and triumphant but it’s a short term gain that can fool you into thinking that you are right.

Instead, work at hearing what they are really saying and feeling. When each of you is committed to understanding the other’s point of view, you begin to create an atmosphere of trust that encourages you to work together. Nothing stops [an argument](#) faster than listening to each other.

You don’t have to agree or even solve the problem. All you really need to do is understand what the other person is saying and feeling. It helps to compliment the person on what you do agree on. It shows that you’re listening and trying to understand their perception. There’s generally a grain of truth to any criticism, so agree to that and build some goodwill.

Guiding Principles



There is no relationship as complicated as that of humans. Below are some guiding principles that you can start using to make changes so that you are not dependent on others to make you happy.

Instant Karma

Tips you can use now

“Instant karma” is that your future is determined by what you do, think and feel today – those are your choices. In any moment, be aware of what you are putting out because you can choose to **create a new result**.

RECHARGING TECHNIQUE – Learn consciously to draw in natural energy, your mind will be clearer and your heart will be healthier.

POSITIVE RESPONSE TECHNIQUE – Stop wasting energy blaming others, feeling sorry for yourself or blaming yourself.

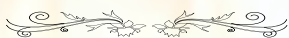
ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT TECHNIQUE - By changing your attitude about your day you can get more of what you want. When you know what you want you are more open to recognizing the possibilities.

WILLFUL BREATHING TECHNIQUE – When nothing else works, go for a walk and breathe deep vital oxygen into your body to relax it. Combine intention and breathe to link your mind, heart, body and spirit.

NATURAL ENERGY HEALING – If you help others, it pulls in more divine and natural energy from God and you receive a boost of spiritual energy. Ask for healing help and get an immediate response.

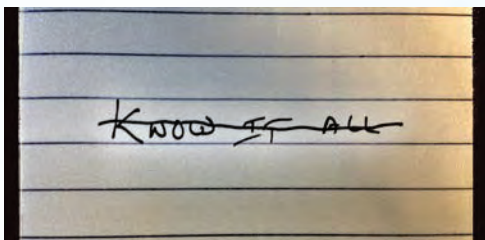
“WHAT IF” EXERCISE – Sometimes when you feel blocked, you just need to re-evaluate a situation from a different perspective to release that block. By exploring the “what if” questions, you will begin to see that in every area of your life there are possibilities.

What to do with a “Know-It-All”



There is a certain kind of friend (commonly called the know-it-all) that can be a good companion but also has many annoying behaviors. They often have high IQ's but low emotional intelligence.

They love to correct other people's version of events and so miss the whole point being made. They don't understand why their frequent interruptions are annoying their friends.



Another typical know-it-all behavior is to insist on solving all your problems for you, whether you want their help or not. They will persist in making recommendations and won't take “no thanks” for an answer.

Ways to help them be a loyal friend:

- The win-win way to deal with them is to put them to work.
- They love to be useful and show off their skills.
- Give them logic problems to solve.
- Don't share all your life's problems and concerns with them.
- When all else fails, spend less time with them.
- Argue your friend into submission - very last resort, so stand firm.

The best way to trigger submissive energy in others, is to display a calm, assertive energy. This means head up and a calm mind. You can't fake it because others will sense it if you aren't sure of yourself. Be confident, knowing that you're going to do whatever you have to do to make this friendship work.

However, if you are always trying and just can't find that middle ground, you may have to evaluate whether this friendship has run its course.

Helping Friends Change



Begin with praise and honest appreciation: It is always easier to listen to unpleasant things after we have heard some praise of our good points. Take the time to find something to praise and appreciate.

Call attention to people's mistakes indirectly: Many people begin their criticism with sincere praise followed by the word "But" and ending with a critical statement. This makes the praise a lead-in to a critical inference and credibility is strained. This could be easily overcome by changing the "but" word to "and".



Talk about your own mistakes before criticizing the other person: Admitting one's own mistakes – even when one hasn't corrected them – can help convince somebody to change their behavior. Talk about your own shortcomings and their superiority.

Arouse in the other person an eager want: The only way on earth to influence another person is to talk about what they want and show them how to get it. First, arouse in them an eager want for the same thing you want. Before you speak, pause and ask yourself: "How can I make this person want to do it?" The secret lies in the ability to understand the other person and see things from that [person's point of view](#).

Appeal to their nobler motives: Being idealists at heart we like to think of motives that sound good. So, in order to change people, appeal to their nobler motives. Assume they are sincere, honest and willing to do better.

To help people change you need to help them see the value of taking action towards that change.

Is Honesty the Best Practice?



Is a little white lie just being nice or is it betraying your authentic self? This is a dilemma because even though the truth almost always sets us free, not all situations demand the whole truth.

It may seem that lying is easier than honesty, that it spares feelings and saves us from explaining our opinions. But truth is like a breath of fresh air that many of us need to hear.

How much of the truth you tell depends on how much of a healthy relationship you want. The closer you want to be, the more truthful you need to be, painful or not. Having said that, I don't think taking others into your confidence is wise until you really know and trust them.

Here are a few things to consider when trying to decide if the truth is worth telling or not.

Words are powerful: When you tell someone what you're thinking or doing, you are making a decision to empower them with information. You may be unintentionally giving them ammunition they can use against you. People should earn your trust before you give it away.

Be honest with yourself: If you want to follow your passion you need to be 100% honest with yourself. It can be difficult but denial will lead you down a false trail. Tell yourself the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth because believing in lies will make your life miserable. If you think lying will save a relationship you value you are wrong. Keep honesty in your relationships and you will have clarity.

Notice how you're feeling: The more you align with truths, the happier your inner soul is. Notice when you're feeling terrible and be open to asking yourself some hard questions about your current reality.

Honesty to loved ones: There is noticeable relief from tension when you don't have to please everyone. Plus it's important to be genuinely known, understood and loved as we are and that goes both ways. Without honesty, we feel empty and disconnected because we need to be able to share what's happening to us, both the good and the bad.

It's Okay To Be Wrong



If we are more sensitive to the views of others, we are less likely to put ourselves in situations where we have to make apologies.

We need to say “I’m wrong” from our hearts and not just from our lips. That requires a genuine change within ourselves and we need to realize its human nature and that everyone makes mistakes.

We can have a positive impact on the lives of others when we admit that we were wrong. Admitting you’re wrong is difficult but avoiding it to preserve your pride doesn’t fool anyone, least of all yourself. The ability to admit you were wrong allows you to correct mistakes.

Our **stubborn will** to be right can drive a wedge between friends or family members which may lead to arguments that in hindsight are just not worth winning. For most of us having to admit we are wrong dents our pride but it does get easier as we grow older and wiser.

The reality is admitting mistakes is a mark of maturity and is also the beginning of our healing process. Denial is hard and fruitless work as we can only grow when we place greater importance on relationships.

Wrongs are inevitable, we are not perfect and we were never intended to be. I have made many mistakes and in the past I did not always have the maturity to say “I’m wrong”. I feel better both mentally and physically when I release myself from the burden of always having to be right.

I take things less seriously and I don’t fear how others might judge me for being wrong. I’ve found that despite my mistakes, most people find it in their hearts to forgive and forget.

If you have been wrong, what would happen if you said to that person, “I’m wrong and you are right”. For your own peace of mind you might try it. You’ll find it’s not as daunting as you might imagine.

***Others feel safer if you speak in a heartfelt and caring manner.
Conflict resolution is more than just not arguing, it’s a
spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.***

Courage to Love



The act of love requires work and courage. When alone there is a certain amount of fear when reaching out to others and loving again. We have been hurt by the loss of a loved one and we don't want to feel that pain again. But if we have the courage to love again we may be blessed with special people to share our life with.

The experience of dating, of doing things differently and being on unfamiliar ground is frightening. How we handle our fear depends on our upbringing, values, faith and courage. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is in the moving forward action in spite of our fears. The loving of anyone always requires courage and involves risks. There is always the risk that that person will break your heart, leaving you more painfully alone than you were before.

We can only love that which is in one way or another important to us. There will always be a risk of loss or rejection, but to avoid love is to narrow and diminish our lives to almost the point of non-existence.

Love anything that lives – a person or pet – and it will die in time. Trust someone and you may be hurt, depend on someone and they may let you down. Yes, the price of love can be pain. But if you are determined not to risk the pain, then you will do without many things: children, friendship, being in love and all the things that make life meaningful.

Have the courage to love again and pain as well as joy will be part of your journey. A full life will have pain. But the only other alternative is not to live fully and that is truly sad.

Dating Again



You are a smart and warmhearted person with lots to give and you are missing the love you used to have. You know what it's like to have a life with someone to love and you wonder about dating.

But years have passed since you last dated and dating isn't as easy or as comfortable as when you were younger. It's hard to strike a balance between real love and all the demands of a mature person.

We know that there are others out there who don't have anything more to offer than we do and yet their love life seems to run more smoothly. We shouldn't beat ourselves up because the path to real love is full of potholes. The real thing is hard to find but it's worth striving for, because real love is what living is all about.

Fear of being abandoned. You cut your date short so that you are the one not committing. Your fear of abandonment could be stopping you from making a good relationship into a great relationship.

Afraid of losing control. You're looking for a relationship where you control everything but you need to make room for some changes.

Fear of being hurt. I understand the fear when you put yourself out there and your heart gets hurt. But the other side is a lonely life without the hope of finding real love to share your life with.

Fear of intimacy. Hey, we are all afraid of intimacy – it's not like we are as young as we used to be. This new person only knows you by what you look like today and there is some serious aging going on. The thing is you put more attention to this than they do. They are just as worried about how you will react to them. After all they aren't as young as they used to be either.

Don't settle because of loneliness, age or finances - because true love is priceless. Wait for that special someone who makes you want to be a better person.

Are You Appreciated?



Wouldn't it just be great if other people would notice our talents and shower us with **recognition**? Yes it would, but that's not reality and so we need to learn how to appreciate ourselves. The only problem is that it's tough to find that balance between tooting our own horn and just plain showing off.

Our first goal is to not belittle or discount what we have accomplished. If we do that then others may take our words at face value or find our self-deprecation remarks annoying. Instead present yourself in the best possible light. If you don't appreciate all that you do who will? Be prepared to state your strengths and if someone does ask about your weaknesses, share your smallest one.



At first you might not feel authentic or like the “real you”, but showing the most flattering view of yourself is every bit as real as showing your flaws and we don't seem to have a problem doing that.

- It's easier to sell ourselves when it's for something we believe in.
- Good practice start's by tooting someone else's accomplishments.
- When someone is promoting themselves, think “hurrah” for them.
- Always be able to back up your claims with positive data.
- Not everyone will support you, no matter what you do.

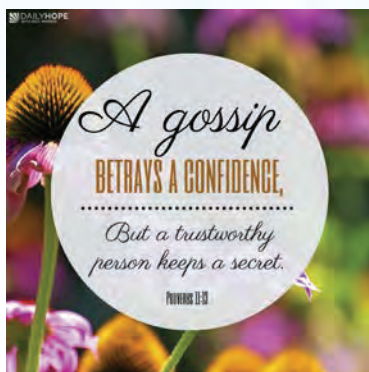
Once you're in tune with yourself, the next step is to generate energy from within and not let external circumstances dictate who you are.

Gossip Can Hurt



Be wary of the person who fills you in on gossip that's circulating about you. Why didn't they end the gossip themselves? Could they be using the gossip to attack your self-esteem instead of addressing what's really bothering them? If you wronged someone admit your mistake. Then say something like "If you ever have a problem with me again, please come and talk directly to me."

Also be wary of those that gossip and want to get you involved. Being honest and gossip free creates an opportunity to invest in better relationships, not only with others but also with yourself. If you get involved you will feel bad that you let them draw you into their gossip.



The real damage from gossip is what it does to your own character. You lose self-respect each time you talk about others behind their back. Even if they are complete idiots, trashing them will not solve anything.

Decide now that you will rise above the "go along with the crowd" mentality and stop being part of the gossip circle.

When the gossip starts, walk away or get busy doing something else. Gossip conversations are difficult because they change the way people see us. We want to be seen as part of the crowd, but sometimes we have to take a stand. Don't let the fear of someone else's reaction stop you from doing what's right.

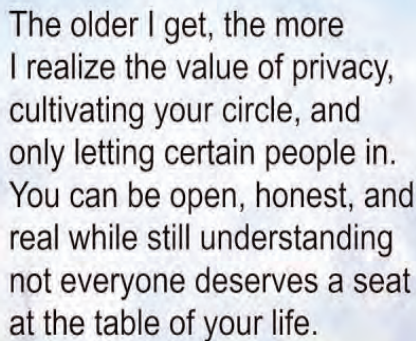
It's possible that they will turn on you so be prepared. In fact, it would be surprising if they didn't, because gossip is the way they work.

Privacy Is Important



Be careful of people that constantly invade your privacy and want to control your every action. You are entitled to and need some privacy – we all do.

There is a huge difference in being together and being smothered. If everything you do is open to criticism and you're always being watched you need to back away from this relationship. They have crossed the line and are being unreasonable.

A rectangular box with a light blue background and a subtle floral pattern. It contains a quote in black serif font and a website URL at the bottom.

The older I get, the more
I realize the value of privacy,
cultivating your circle, and
only letting certain people in.
You can be open, honest, and
real while still understanding
not everyone deserves a seat
at the table of your life.

www.stevemaraboli.com

Don't tiptoe around this issue because this inappropriate behavior could turn dangerous. Allowing their dominance and control will only lead to you feeling resentful of them.

Tell them honestly how their actions are affecting you. If the cost of this relationship is that you can't be 100 % yourself, than the cost is too high.

Stand up for yourself here and now, before things get much worse. They need to learn to respect your boundaries just the way you are.

The other part of privacy isn't about others but of you giving it away too easily. Not everyone is worthy of your full accounting on what is going on in your life. There are some things that should be kept close to your chest and only shared with your inner circle of trusted friends and family.

Be a Better Friend



Smile: People who smile tend to attract positive people. You must have a good time meeting people if you expect them to enjoy themselves.

Become genuinely interested in other people: If we want to make friends, let's put ourselves out to do things for other people – things that require time, energy, unselfishness and thoughtfulness. Never miss a chance to offer support or to say “congratulations”.

A person's name is to that person the sweetest word to hear:

During the conversation repeat the name several times and try to associate it in your mind with the person's features, expression and general appearance. If you didn't hear it clearly ask to hear it again.

Be a good listener and encourage others to talk about themselves:

Listen with [genuine interest](#) and concentrated attention. Keep your voice low and kind as you ask questions that the other person will enjoy answering. The road to a person's heart is to talk about the things he or she treasures most. Taking time to find out what they enjoy talking about pays off for both sides.

Make the other person feel important and do it sincerely: Radiate a little happiness and pass on a bit of honest appreciation without trying to get something out of the other person. Always make the other person feel important. Courtesies like – Please, Thank you, etc. are all good manners. Relax and enjoy their company by not over thinking things. It's okay to ask a few questions and then let them lead the conversation.

Trust Your Instincts



For lasting joy you have to learn to trust your instincts for a sense of what's best for you. Your instinct is like a small voice, a sensation beneath the surface that tells you to pay attention.

We are the only animals on this planet that deny and ignore our instincts. Do you remember a time when you went against your gut feeling? Next time you get a “feeling” and don't know what to do, do nothing. Quiet your mind so you can listen to that small, still voice.

Usually composed and capable, we don't want to burden others with our worries or loneliness. Still, we can't block out those feelings. Please call someone and give them a chance to do something for you, even if it's just to be a listening ear.

Luckily, spending time with friends can chase away that loneliness and even nourish your soul. Friends are angels and when you bring them into your life, they brighten everything with their playfulness and love.

How often in our daily lives have we put conditions on our happiness? When we get older, retire, pay off the mortgage, get the children grown – then we will find the time to do what we want.

I'm often too serious and involved in my projects. That is when my friends rescue me with some fun and laughter. I saw this plaque while shopping with my friends from “Chicks Night Out” – a group of ladies that have lost a parent, spouse or child.

***“Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass.
It's about learning to dance in the rain.”***

I stopped and asked myself, “So, am I dancing in the rain?” I think I am. I do know that I try to be more committed to taking time to recognize and be grateful for the immense blessings that are around me.

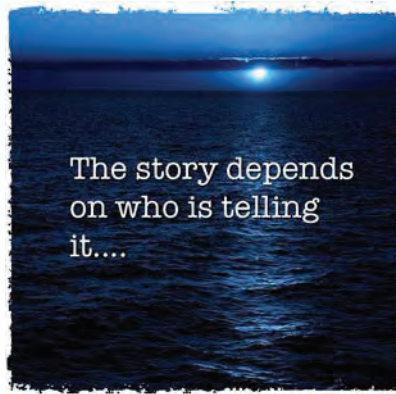
Thanks to friends and family I celebrate my blessings more. Yes, one step at a time, I'm learning to dance in the rain but I would never have gotten to that place without learning to trust my instincts and friends.

Two Sides to Every Story



One of the hardest things to do is to be subjective, to look at both sides. We all have a built-in bias when it comes to our personal life. But if you can learn to see through another person's eyes, you will have the ability to see the situation from their point of view.

The only way we can get this knowledge is if there is an honest desire on both sides to understand each other's point of view.



How can you strength a relationship if you can't connect with them, when you can't understand their feelings when they have a point of view different from you? You have to make a conscious effort to do it.

You need to discover what makes them tick (fears and values) if you want to connect in a meaningful way.

By stepping back and trying to understand their point of view, you get to see **both sides** of the story. Knowing both sides is knowledge and power. Without it you only have 50 % of a problem and so therefore only 50 % of the solution.

Don't make any judgements from one person's side of the story. If you get caught up in the drama without hearing both sides of the story you may say and do things that can never be retracted.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people. By helping others you help yourself and you will change in ways that you could never imagine.

People that give of themselves for community support triple their chances of having a life of joy rather than despair. Part of the reason is the new friendships they make.

**Confucius “I sought for happiness and happiness eluded me;
I turned to service and happiness found me.”**



Not all volunteer opportunities are created equal so you should select your volunteer work based on the joy you have doing it. You need to find something you believe in and have passion for.

One woman I know is very creative and she volunteers at a non-profit gift shop. She loves setting up the window displays and creating her own setups. Not only is she getting to do what she is passionate about, she is also getting to socialize and meet new people.

No matter what life deals you, there is always going to be a little “hole” if you don’t include spirituality. Research shows that the happiest people are the ones who are doing something to make the world a better place. It doesn’t seem to matter if it’s a big something or a small something as long as we are doing something that makes us feel good.

You don’t know if you’ll like something until you try it, so don’t quit before you start because of your fear of the unknown. This isn’t about what anyone else thinks you “should” be or do. It’s about you finding yourself when you’re helping others.

Spirituality

There is no greater relationship then what you have with God. Talk to God as you would your best friend – share your blessing and your worries. **God is at your side** so tell Him what is in your heart.



- Make your prayers simple and not stilted, rehearsed or formal. People who have this simple contact with God have power and can rise above the difficulties of life.
- Practice talking to God as you go about your day – close your eyes for a moment and have a word or two with God.
- Affirm the fact that God is with you.
- Pray thinking positive, not negative thoughts.
- Always pray that you are willing to accept God's will, whatever it is. Ask for what you want but be willing to accept otherwise.
- Pray for strength to do your best and have confidence enough in God to take care of the rest.
- Say a prayer for those who do not like you or have done you harm. This will release you from those stressful relationships.
- Be open to praying for your family, friends and country. Take time to pray for peace so that you can enjoy your relationships.
- Lastly, believe that your prayers will be answered, even if the answer is not what you wanted.

“I will” List of People Skills



- I will skillfully listen to them.
- I will applaud and compliment them.
- I will pause before answering them.
- I will acknowledge people who are waiting to see me.
- I will use “you, your” in my conversations.
- I will be naturally agreeable, telling people when I agree with them.
- I will not disagree out loud unless it is absolutely necessary.
- I will admit it when I am wrong.
- I will look at people when they are talking.
- I will listen intently and lean towards the speaker.
- I won’t interrupt or change topics.
- I will remind myself that people are interested in themselves.
- I will decrease “I, Me, My” and increase my use of “You, Your”.
- I will ask them about themselves.
- I will value people by knowing their likes, values and needs.
- I will sincerely smile before I say anything to anybody.
- I will ask for their opinion.
- I will make a concerted effort to be friendlier and more pleasant.
- I will be generous with sincere praise.
- I will praise acts, not people.
- I will say at least one kind thing daily to at least 3 people.
- I will voice my criticism in privacy.
- I will ask, not demand, co-operation.
- I will work at thanking people – for the big and little things.
- I will be sincere when I clearly say “thank you”.

Vitamin “F” for Friends



Why do I have a variety of friends who are all different in character? Some of them can even be considered marginal? While others surpass me! How do I get on with them all? I think that each one helps to bring out a “different” part of me...

- With one of them I am a polite, good girl.
- I joke with another friend.
- I sit down and talk about serious matters with one of them.
- With another I giggle at every silly thing.
- I have wine with one and dance with another.
- I listen to one friend’s problems and give them advice,
- Then I listen as another friend advises me.

They are all like pieces of a jigsaw, that when completed form a treasure box. A treasure box of friends!

F•R•I•E•N•D•S

They are all my friends who understand me better than myself and support me through good days and bad. They are like colourful antidepressants that I take on different days.

Real Age doctors tell us that friends are good for our health. Dr. Oz calls them Vitamin “F” (for Friends) and counts them as priceless. Research shows that people in strong social circles have less depression and terminal strokes. Taking Vitamin “F” will help us be younger in attitude, adding years to our lives.

I’m so happy that I have a variety of Vitamin “F” in my life that I value and keep in touch with. We should continue to see the funny side of life and always be open to more Vitamin “F”.

I don’t know who gave me this little “Vitamin F” article or how old it is but please pass it on to all the friends that provide you with your Vitamin “F”.

The Cost of Caring



The emotional exhaustion of burnout is often accompanied by a deterioration in relationships, either with family or friends.

I DON'T WANNA PLAY
THIS GAME ANYMORE



Bad relationships can cause people to report feeling tired and run-down, finding it hard to get up in the morning. This tiredness comes from tension because you are wound up tight, unable to relax or sleep well.

Bad dreams and nightmares may begin to disturb your rest and sleepless nights will add to your distress. Because of the body's adjusting tolerance, those using sleeping pills for insomnia may find that over time ever increasing amounts are needed to fall asleep.

Physical health is not the only price of caring – psychological health is also involved. One phase of burnout is a sense of reduced personal accomplishment and a loss of self-esteem. We may begin to feel bad about ourselves, about the kind of people we have become and what we should have done or not done.

In the end, if you are down on yourself you may pull away from other people, becoming isolated and lonely. A breakdown of self-esteem is a central characteristic of loneliness and depression.

We have only a limited time on this earth and we need to face the reality of death. When we do, that constant awareness of the limit of our time to live and love should give us the courage to care about others without losing our own health; physically and mentally.

Why Do They Think That Way?



Show respect for the other person's opinions: There's positive magic in such phrases as: "I may be wrong. I frequently am. Let's examine the facts." That will stop all argument and inspire your opponent to be fair.

The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it: You can't win an argument without hurting their pride.

If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically: When we are right, let's try to win people gently and tactfully to our way of thinking, and when we are wrong let's admit our mistakes quickly.

Begin in a friendly way: The use of gentleness and friendliness is demonstrated daily to make people change their minds more readily.

Get the other person saying "Yes, Yes" immediately: Begin by emphasizing and keep on emphasizing the things on which you agree. "Yes" is forward-moving, accepting, open attitude and the more "Yes" we can get the more likely we are to succeed in getting the attention for our ultimate proposal.

Let the other person do a great deal of the talking: Let the other person talk themselves out. They know more about their problems than you do. So ask them questions and listen patiently with an open mind.

Let the other person feel that the idea is his or hers: We all like to be consulted about our wishes, our wants and our thoughts. Letting the other person think the idea is theirs will build trust between you.

Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view: Try to think the whole thing through from another person's point of view and ask yourself, "Why Do They Think That Way?"

Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and views: Most people you will ever meet are hungering for sympathy. Give it to them and they will appreciate you. Say "I don't blame you for feeling as you do." This will help create good will and encourage the other person to listen attentively to what you have to say.

Know Yourself



Let's stop wasting time and energy putting ourselves down for something we can't change. No matter how we approach it, we are dealing with our mental thoughts and thoughts can be changed.



- The best way to change a thought is to repeat a positive comment over and over to yourself. Such as “I am no longer helpless and I take my power back”.
- The minute you say it, you are stepping out of the victim class and you are creating a pattern of self-worth. You are **worthy** of the very best of life and you need to accept it.
- Almost all of our programming, both negative and positive, became part of us by the time we were three years old. Our life since then is based on what we accept and believe about ourselves.
- What happened in the past is done and you can now treat yourself the way you want to be treated by other people.
- Be kind to yourself. If you love yourself others will react to that positive energy. See yourself at your highest potential.
- Flow with the changes taking place in your life as best as you can. Life is ever-changing and you are doing the best you can. Change is part of everyone's life so don't be hard on yourself if you stumble along the way.

10 Questions that Inspire



1. When was the last time you did something totally for yourself?
2. What do you want people to remember about you?
3. If you could learn anything in a day – what would it be?
4. Have you ever helped a complete stranger? How?
5. What do you dream of doing? (even if it makes no logical sense)
6. What is an opportunity you wish you had of gotten involved with?
7. Where would you like to travel?
8. What did you want to be when you were a child? And now?
9. What is your life's desire? Why?
10. What are your biggest challenges? Why?

Below is a link to my product page and remember that the more information you have, the better you will be at inspiring yourself.

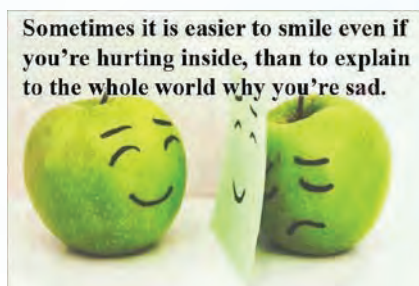
[Product Page - Sisterhood of Widows](#)

Why do Friends Drift Away?



Unfortunately, after you move, change careers or have a life changing event friends may shed genuine tears for you but soon the demands of living set in and their lives return to normal. But, not so for you!

Just when you need more support, most of your friends have moved on and are thinking that “you will get used to your new life”. Although this is true to a point, time has to pass for you to get used to these changes.



They drift away because they want to believe you're feeling better and because they feel helpless and uncomfortable, unsure how to help you.

After the “I'm so sorry” people just don't know what to say. So they say nothing. In the weeks and months that follow they just don't have the time or patience for friends that need their time and support.

You start to wonder if you are boring people, are you being depressing or a downer to be around. People desperately want to think that you're OK, so that you're no longer on their “list to worry about.”

They think they are being helpful when they urge “Be strong” or exclaim “You look so well!” to a friend who's having a hard time. So, you're always trying to find this balance between wanting the world to know that you are lonely and not wanting to inconvenience anyone.

We are strong but when life knocks us down we can't always “get over it” as if it were no big deal. We will always need the love and support of family and friends.

Positive Friends



I encourage you to seek out **positive friends** by listening to them with the intent to see the good in what they are saying or doing.

If you tune into the positive, you can respond with a positive phrase like “You can do it” - “Thank you” or “That’s a great idea”.

A positive frame of mind changes how you think and enables you to lift up others.



All of this self-esteem comes from simply developing the habit of looking for the good in others. When that happens, you begin to see the good in yourself. Before you know it people will recognize the good in you and praise you for it. The point is a positive message – a simple positive sentence can change a person’s life.

So the questions are:

- What kind of sentences are you speaking?
- What are you hearing from those in your life – positive or negative?
- Are you creating an encouraging atmosphere for others?
- Are the people in your life dragging you down or lifting you up?

I know that life is beyond hard and that deep loneliness can get a hold of us to the point that no joy or light can come into our lives. But positive friends contain a hidden power that, when released, can change us.

The Power of Groups



A healthy relationship is when you know how to manage a "one on one" friendship and yet also know how to be part of a group.

Create a group of caring friends around someone you care about who needs support or help. Take turns phoning, visiting or doing errands. Gather together to share a meal and show how much they mean to you.

There is nothing more powerful than getting together with a group of close friends and sharing some laughs. For anyone who could use a hug, a good laugh or a push in the right direction, there's power in groups. The goal in groups is to create an atmosphere of trust so that you can communicate more authentically.

We are not designed to celebrate alone. If you're not already part of at least one supportive group – family, friends, coworkers, church, etc. – then create one.

- Exchange stories, give encouragement and swap ideas.
- Challenge each other.
- Bring together those with a common interest.
- Look for people with positive energy.
- Don't let the group go too long without getting together.

Never stop making new friends to hang out with. Share your serious side but also join new groups and embrace that silly part of you that hopefully you never outgrow.

I know that life is better when you share it with your cherished friends. I also know that it gets even better the more you expand your group of friends.

It's a girl thing because we women respond to stress by connecting and communicating with friends and family. That's how we calm ourselves, get things done and survive in times of trouble.

Resources for Healthy Relationships



www.thesisterhoodofwidows.com

Resource web site with many articles and blogs about life.

How To Make Friends

Friends are good for you but positive, upbeat pals are the real gems in life. They're the ones that will rally behind you, offer a smile and a hug, and leave you feeling better about yourself.

<http://sisterhoodofwidows.com/2011/07/04/friendships/>

Hidden Benefits of Friendships

Women are hardwired to crave close friendships and these bonds can provide us with unique benefits. Here, a few things researchers have uncovered about the power of hugging friends.

<http://sisterhoodofwidows.com/2011/10/01/hugging-the-perfect-cure-for-what-ails-you/>



Our Shared Journey Trilogy

1 - A Guide on Grieving to Healing

- Emotionally everyone handles their grief differently.
- Shows you how to deal with grief so that you can heal.
- Provides tips and support for moving forward in a positive way.

2 - A Guide to Manage Stress and Sleep

- This is the ultimate guide on stress and lack of sleep.
- Learn how to manage your stress so that it doesn't control you.
- Understand what you can do to get a good night's sleep.

3 - A Guide to Healthy Relationships

- Explains the physical and emotional pain of loneliness.
- Shows you how to let go of relationships that are hurtful.
- Provides you with the skills needed to create new friendships.

Order Print Editions: [Guides](#)

