

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS

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1. Definition and Nature

“A state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealing” (Merriam-Webster).

Relationships are:

- Mutually interactive
- Contractual
(Involving agreements about seeking an end)
- Continuously dynamic
(Something is always happening)
- Synergistic
(The combination is greater than the sum of each part)

2. The Contexts of Relationships

- i. A Primary Relationship
 - It exists *for its own sake*: It provides mutual support to fulfill human needs for wellbeing.
(This occurs through Connectedness, Validation and Purpose.)
 - It is informal.
(occurring among family and friends)
- ii. A Secondary Relationship
 - It exists for *a purpose beyond the persons involved*. (eg. a work task)
 - It is formal
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- iii. A transactional relationship
(both *using each other* as a convenience for personal vs. mutual ends)

3. Where Relationships occur

Locally and Globally among:

- Friendship “duos”
- Small Peer or Mixed Groups
- Kinship
 - Couples
 - Families
- Communities
- Organizations

4. Requirements for Healthy Relationships

- i. Flexibility for change and growth
Evolving positively vs. having a cyclical recurrence of the same challenges.
- ii. Appropriate use of power
 - *Balanced* use for *win-win* purposes.
 - *Imbalanced* use for *win-lose* purposes.
- iv. Achieving Mature Intimacy
 - *Nurturing Attachment* vs.
 - Overattachment
(enmeshment)
 - Attachment with Conflicts or
 - Distancing

v. Appropriate Boundary Management

- ***Flexible but protective***

boundaries (interdependence)

vs.

Impervious(unchanging)

boundaries (excessive independence) or

Unmanaged boundaries

(*codependence* or excessive reliance on other people for approval, identity and functioning)

5. Determinants of a Healthy Relationship

- i. Childhood attachment and socialization for maturity
- ii. Biological wellbeing
- iii. Cultural and Socio-Economic health
- iv. Spiritual empowerment

6. Strategies for Healthy Relationships *

- i. Communicate Well
- ii. Cherish Emotions Well
- iii. Care Well
- iv. Cooperate Well

* See article “The 4 C’s of Relationship Wellness” for related skills.