

10 SIMPLE TIPS FOR IMPROVING ANY RELATIONSHIP



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HEART TO HEART COUNSELING

When it comes to relationships, you, and everyone you know are like a diamond, since we are all multi-faceted. Mother or father, daughter or son, husband or wife, brother or sister, co-worker, or friend, we all assume many roles, each requiring ongoing interpersonal action if the relationships are to prosper. But taking action isn't always easy. For years, we've been told love is a two-way street, yet the stresses of modern life have riddled that street with more potholes and speed bumps than we ever dreamed possible.



To nurture a relationship, we must begin with a foundation of goodwill, in which both people desire the best for each other. From there, the architecture gets trickier. So, we offer the following suggestions which, if applied, can help enhance any relationship. It all begins when you:

1. LISTEN BETTER — More than anything else, people want to be understood when they speak, and to make their points, they express themselves not only in words, but in body language as well. Your "mission" when listening, is to identify the feeling beneath the person's words, and reflect that back to him or her. For example, if your wife is describing a near-accident she just experienced on the highway, you might say "That sounds pretty scary." This reflecting back is a skill that can be learned by anyone. To practice and use this skill, you must remember and accept, that the feelings, not necessarily the facts that the other person is expressing, are true for them and are an important part of what they are trying to communicate. When you let the other person know that you understand his or her feelings, you've taken a monumental step in bringing the two of you closer together.

2. STRIVE FOR CONGRUENCY — Have you ever known someone who shakes their head "no," when they say "Yes," or who snarls through their teeth, "I'm not angry"! These are examples of incongruency, in which people say one thing but express something totally different. You must strive to keep your vocal tones, facial expressions, and body language consistent with the words you use. Mixed messages are confusing to children and adults alike. And no matter how hard you try, the other person will ultimately believe the nonverbal message beneath the words.

3. ALLOW FOR FEELINGS — People get into trouble when they cut off their feelings, yet strong feelings can be difficult to tolerate. Remember that feelings are what keep relationships alive. We must all give ourselves and others permission to feel more deeply, whether joy or sorrow, fear, or elation, hurt or love. We're bombarded with so much negative information these days it can be difficult to stay connected with our emotions. But just look at our fascination with movie stars. Actors excel in the art of vividly portraying feelings, and we spend millions of dollars collectively to have our feelings stimulated. Let's face it, feelings are where we live. They provide the link between our bodies and our spirits, and through them we access our spirituality. In relationships, the ability to express and accept feelings is the best guarantor of ongoing communication.

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4. STRESS THE POSITIVE — If you really want to improve your relationships quickly, tell friends and loved ones what is right about them, not what's wrong. Constantly look for, and comment on, what qualities you appreciate and admire in your friend or loved one. This is a "fix-it" oriented society, and we are ever on the lookout for problems. From childhood on, we're taught to avoid a "swelled head," to shrug off praise as somehow senseless puffery, a false buffer against the trials of life. We don't wish to minimize the importance of confronting and resolving differing viewpoints, but at the same time, it's vital we take time to mention what's good about our relationships. Praise, when sincere and deserved, is extraordinarily empowering.

When you praise, you raise the other person's sense of self-esteem, which is precisely what you want back from others. We believe that this is an apt prescription for society in general.

5. GIVE WHAT'S NEEDED — In any conversation, you must determine what your loved one or friend needs from you. Does your son or daughter want help solving a problem? Is your husband or wife looking for sympathy over trouble at the office? Figure it out or ask them - then measure your words accordingly. Their response will tell you if you're on the right track. If you're the one in need of someone to talk to, be aware of what it is you want from the other person, then try stating your goals up front to your friend or loved one. "I just want to talk this out," you might say. "You don't have to fix anything." That could come as a big relief to your friend, who may want to help, but perhaps doesn't quite know how.

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6. GIVE TRUST, EARN TRUST — Unless or until we feel safe, both physically and emotionally, we cannot proceed to grow in a relationship. To earn trust, we must prove ourselves honest and harmless to loved ones and friends. That means our intentions must always be grounded in caring. To give trust to another, we must be willing to risk pain and to surrender ignorance. Once you enter into a relationship, you open yourself up to the other person's perceptions, and this can result in hard lessons about yourself. However, in a trusting climate, these can become golden opportunities for self-awareness and healing love.

7. LEARN TO COMPROMISE -

"Compromise" has become a dirty word in our modern society. It shouldn't be. Compromise is simply the willingness of two parties, based on mutual caring, to move towards each other. Compromise is not the same as submission. When you submit to another, you create a "better than/less than" environment, in which one person wins at the other's expense. This invariably creates anger and can cause a desire for revenge. Instead, develop the art of compromise, in which both sides give a little, and end up getting a lot. When you care more about the other person, than rigidly maintaining a given position, only good can result.



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8.EXPRESS THE FEELINGS BENEATH THE ANGER — At times, disagreements erupt into moments of anger. The key is for each person to help the other express that anger without it boiling over into emotional mayhem. One way to do that is to stick to current events. Don't dig up wrongs from last month or last year. Just deal with the issue at hand. The most important thing to understand about anger is that it is a secondary feeling. Underneath anger lies fear or hurt. Fear is the anticipation of loss, be it pride, self-esteem, or material possessions. A sense of loss makes a people feel vulnerable, so they shift into anger to retain a sense of power, of being in control. But remember, it's O.K. to express that masked fear and hurt. In fact, it will get right to the root of the problem.

9.SUSTAIN INTEREST AND SHARE EXPERIENCES — What else of real meaning do you have to give another person but your time and yourself? When you are connected to your feelings you will always be interesting. When loved ones are connected to their feelings, you will always be interested in them. Sustaining interest in others has to do with your ability to love, not their ability to be lovable. That means you accept responsibility for keeping your relationships exciting and meaningful, which isn't hard to do, but does take effort. It means you choose an active role in the lives of those you care about. Their mundane details of work and school, their familiar and repeated mistakes in love and life, must remain important to you. That doesn't mean you have to like everything they do. But choosing to be part of another person's life, means you take the journey together.

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10. WELCOME CHALLENGE AND GROWTH — What's the best place to get to in a relationship? Not one of sedate harmony, not one of constant fun, but rather a place where you welcome the challenges your friend or loved one presents to you, where you view your disagreement as opportunities for personal growth, and where your loved one's insights serve as a beacon into your inner mysteries. You need to be fairly secure in yourself before this can happen; otherwise, you might feel terribly threatened. Yet it's worth all the time and pain, the blown chances, and the huffy silences. We grow, whether we want to or not, whether we're aware of it or not. To grow consciously, purposefully, in concert with those we love, is to grow magnificently, and to embody all that we deem best about being human.



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Life is a series of humbling paradoxes: we are all male and female, living yet dying. We desire to be open, yet we are afraid. As we rumble through life trying to figure it out, we believe we should observe one rule to help us begin resolving these paradoxes: don't travel alone. Life is with people. Our relationships define us and nourish us. We must be sure to treasure and nurture them.

“Who am I, and who am I in this relationship?”

Heart To Heart Counseling is proudly introducing a non-pathologizing way of raising self-esteem and eliminating ‘stuck-ness’ in your most important relationships...!

Multi-Dimensional Relational Therapy (MDRT)

Based on our many decades of research and clinical experience, we have designed a new model, which we have named Multi-Dimensional Relational Therapy (MDRT). Our objective is to assist you in transforming the inner core of your being, to create high self-esteem, lasting love, connection, and intimacy, both with yourself, and between you and your partner.

Dimension 1 – Ego Functioning and Defenses

Before we grew up and developed an adult intimate relationship with another person, we were all individuals who were learning about ourselves and the world around us. This learning took place through the culture we were raised in, and through childhood life experiences. These experiences gave us both positive loving, and/or negative interactions and connections, which left us with feelings of being loved and cared for, or the lack thereof. How do those experiences shape and form our personality, and affect our ability to create intimacy later in life?

Dimension 2 – Spiritual Transcendence

What most couples say they want when they come to counseling, is to achieve a ‘more fulfilling relationship’. What we have found is that this usually has to do with one or both partners not feeling loved in the way that is meaningful to them.

How does spirituality and the embodiment of spiritual values inform our ability to have high self-esteem, and to give and receive love in the way that is most meaningful to us and our partner?

Dimension 3 – Sexuality

How happy are you with your sexual life? Has sex with your partner become routine and/or unfulfilling? Is sexual desire an unresolved issue between you and your partner?

Can you say exactly what you want in bed, or let your partner really see you during an orgasm (or do you have orgasms)? How inhibited do you feel in bed? Do you have sexual questions that remain unanswered? Have you stopped having sex altogether? Have you attempted and tried to use sex to get non-sexual needs met in your relationship? Do you fantasize or act out your desires to have sex outside your relationship?

Dimension 4 - Attachment and Childhood development

When we care deeply about another person, we form an emotional attachment to that person. This is ubiquitous in human development throughout the world. One dictionary definition of *attachment* is that *attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond between two people in which each seeks closeness and feels more secure, when in the presence of the attachment figure.* How we attach emotionally in our romantic relationships is a vital area to be both explored and understood if we desire true intimacy to develop.

There are three basic attachment styles:

1 – Secure attachment

2 – Anxious, Ambivalent attachment

3 – Avoidant attachment

Understanding how these develop, and which style you utilized can help you to co-create the secure attachment style that everyone needs and wants.

Dimension 5 – Trauma and the loss of the authentic true-self

Many individuals enter into a relationship with one another while having many unexamined traumas as part of their unique life histories, which have impaired the formation of their self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and ultimately the formation of their authentic true-selves. We call this impairment the ‘adapted-self’, or the ‘co-dependent-self’. Many marital conflicts are the end result of these unexamined and unresolved traumas they carry with them. This dimension’s primary focus will be on the impact of trauma on the individuals’ authentic true-self, and by extension his/her relational-self. Gaining a deeper understanding of this will allow us to transcend these traumatic experiences and help form positive loving relationships within ourselves and with our significant other.

Dimension 6 – Communication

How we express ourselves to our partners often informs how our partners respond to us. Do we focus on the negative, i.e., say what we are not getting (you never hug me when you come home from work) or do we focus on the positive and ask for what we want more directly? (i.e., I really appreciate you coming home on time, and if you would give me a hug when you enter you would make my day!).

What makes communication so vitally important to long-lasting romance, and what are the secrets to having intimate communication with your partner? Do you listen to each other in order to understand, or do you listen to respond, and to be right?

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Robert B. Jaffe, Ph.D., LMFT, has been working as a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Ericksonian Certified Hypnotherapist, with over four decades of clinical experience in Encino, California. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from California State University, Northridge – Northridge, California, a Master of Science degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of LaVern, LaVern California, and a Doctoral degree in Philosophy and Hypnotherapy from the American Institute of Hypnotherapy, in Anaheim California. He concentrates his practice focusing on the treatment of addictions, trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and couples counseling. He further specializes in the treatment of childhood trauma, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional/physical abandonment. His many years working in the community and his extensive academic and in field training have established Dr. Jaffe as a seasoned and experienced psychotherapist. In addition to his clinical responsibilities, Robert is an unwavering and dependable friend, cherishing deep connections with his loved ones, embracing the joys of travel, and nourishing his body with a commitment to healthy eating.

Mitra Rashidian, Ph.D., LMFT., CST, ABS., is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) in full-time private practice in Encino, California. In addition, she is a Certified Sex Therapist through The American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT). Also, she is Board Certified Diplomate by the American Board of Sexology (ABS). Further, she is a Certified Hypnotherapist via the Ericksonian Foundation in Arizona. She was trained at The Valley Trauma Center in Van Nuys, California, where she worked extensively with sexual assault survivors.

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Committed to sexual healthcare and mental well-being research, Dr. Rashidian has focused on the enhancement of relationships and sexual enrichment over the past 25 years. Her passion is to help all people achieve and experience joy and fulfillment with their partners. “We all want everlasting happiness in our lives, and I believe that this is achievable.”

In addition to her clinical and research pursuits, she possesses a remarkable talent in the culinary arts, an enduring passion for painting, a fervent dedication to gardening, and a strong commitment to maintaining a healthy lifestyle through mindful eating and regular exercise habits. Further information about her clinical work and focus can be obtained at Psychology Today, trfsq.com, and ResearchGate.

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