

Making and Breaking Relationships

Relationships are built on the basis of mutual trust, nurtured by empathy and understanding, and strengthened by positive reinforcements, and endure by passing the hard tests of disagreements and adversity.

Things that matter most in keeping a relationship viable and enjoyable are respect, empathy, understanding, appreciation, and knowledge that mistakes are unavoidable. Finding excuses for unintended mistakes to help friends escape embarrassment is an important component of any good relationship. On the other hand, doubt, ambiguity and negativity are the worst enemies of good relationships; they are signs of mistrust and lack of appreciation and a cause of uncomfortable feelings that work to weaken relationships in the short run and destroy them in the long run.

Doubt and negativity can be seen and felt in continuous complaining, repeated criticism, lack of respect for the other when circumstances demand it, and tendency to spoil every occasion by refusing to go along or by putting conditions on participation that are hard to meet. Being defensive and insisting on reminding the other of bad things while ignoring the good ones is another sign of negativity; it makes the other feel uncomfortable and apprehensive. These attitudes often reflect lack of self confidence or jealousy or envy and cause relationships to become difficult to manage and hard to sustain and thus nurture. When partners in a relationship fail to strengthen their relationship by positive reinforcements, they allow things that tie them together to wither away and, in the process, to cause the relationship to become unimportant and slowly die; it could also cause the relationship to be transformed from a friendly and enjoyable one to a bad relationship characterized by jealousy and sometimes by enmity as well.

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