

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

OVERVIEW

Interpersonal relationships are the interactions one has with other individuals across various social circles including family, friends, romantic partners, coworkers, and others. The quality and level of intimacy within these relationships develop throughout life, and are likely to vary based largely upon the individuals within them. The formation of these relationships is rooted in many factors including genetics, common interests, education, environment and location, life events, occupation, personality, skill sets, socioeconomic status, and a variety of other circumstances. Life skills relating to social health can also affect the nature and maintenance of these relationships over time.

The nature of interpersonal relationships are strongly connected to the accurate interpretation of and appropriate reactions to various forms of social interaction including body language, facial expression, other non-verbal communications, as well as verbal communication.¹ Characteristics of a healthy relationship include equality, fairness, honesty, mutual respect, support, and trust. Members of healthy relationships are likely to, set boundaries, take care of each other along with oneself, express oneself openly, maintain a sense of individual identity, resolve conflicts, respect each other's privacy, and ultimately be a source of happiness for one another. Traits of an unhealthy relationship include one or both members causing or practicing control, fear, inequality, lack of respect, lack of safety, manipulation, neglect pressure, unfairness, or violence. These interactions often increase one's stress through abuse, danger, harm, or pain, and may benefit from professional intervention. In some severe cases, it may be advisable to end the relationship entirely.²

Relationships can reinforce or deter health behaviors, and can provide or deny different health-promoting experiences. For instance, relationships can affect behaviors including alcohol and drug use or abuse, eating habits, medical adherence, physical activity and exercise, religious involvement, sexual activity, and smoking. Relationships can also serve to provide the experiencing of emotional support, feelings of being in control, honesty, sense of responsibility and meaning. These behaviors and experiences have strong connections to one's stress which affects both mental and physical health. In turn, these effects can positively influence aspects relating to other dimensions of health including education, creativity, home environment, and work.³ The presence of quality relationships has been tied to mortality as stronger social relationships can positively affect the development of the body's regulatory systems. Additionally, such positive relationships can improve or help to prevent conditions such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, depression, high blood pressure, and immune system functioning, and ultimately improve one's life expectancy.⁴

RESOURCES

¹ <https://hr.od.nih.gov/workingatnih/competencies/core/interpersonal.htm>

² <http://depts.washington.edu/hhpccweb/health-resource/healthy-vs-unhealthy-relationships/>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3150158/>

⁴ http://hsb.sagepub.com/content/51/1_suppl/S54.full

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information, tools, and resources about interpersonal relationships, visit:

<https://www.girlshealth.gov/>

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/do-you-trust-your-partner/>

<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/healthy-relationships/healthy-friendships.html>

<http://kidshealth.org/en/teens/healthy-relationship.html>

<https://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/InfoBooth/Friendship/Quiz-How-healthy-is-your-friendship.aspx>

<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/sites/default/files/public/KMECC3-201208-Building%20blocks%20healthy%20family%20relationships.pdf>

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/170678-how-to-build-a-healthy-family-relationship/>

<http://www.loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/>

<https://medlineplus.gov/domesticviolence.html>

<http://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/healthy-relationships/>