

# Basics of Healthy Relationships by Jim Rohn

Nothing can bring more joy to life than beautifully fulfilling relationships. The depth of meaning, understanding and appreciation that these kinds of relationships bring is almost unfathomable. And, of course, as many people find out, nothing can bring so much pain as a broken relationship with someone dear to you.

Yes, relationships make the world go 'round. For better or for worse. But the exciting thing is that we can do much to increase our chances of having terrific relationships—relationships that are fulfilling and exciting, rich with meaning, joy and love. There are basics that govern most human relationships, and these basics are what I want to cover below. So here is my list of the eight essentials that I believe make up the basics of healthy relationships.

**Love.** Now, this all depends on your definition of love. Most people think that love is a feeling, but I would strongly debate that point. Actually, the concept of “like” is really about feelings.

When you say you like someone, you are talking about how you feel. But when you say that you love someone, you are not necessarily talking about how you feel about them. Love is much deeper than a feeling. Love is a commitment we make to people to always treat that person right and honorably. Yes, for those we become especially close to, we will have feelings of love, but I believe it is time for us to re-examine what we mean by love. We must expand our definition of what love means by including the commitment aspect of love. For healthy relationships, we must love everyone. We may not like them based on how we feel about them, but we should love them based on our definition of love above, which, in turn, determines how we should act toward them—that is, treat them right and honorably. This is the basis of all healthy relationships.

**Serving Heart.** My good friend Zig Ziglar says frequently that “you can have everything you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want out of life.” The concept he is talking about is having a heart and life that is focused on serving other people. The Bible puts it this way: Consider others’ interests as more important than your own. This is also fundamental to healthy relationships.

**Honest Communication.** In any good relationship, you will find open and honest communication. Communication is so important because it is the vehicle that allows us to verbalize what is inside us and enables it to connect with another person. Isn’t communication amazing? One person is feeling one thing, and through communication, another person can find that out and feel it, too—amazing. And this is a vital goal in good relationships—to communicate, to tell each other what we are thinking and what we are feeling. It enables us to make a connection. Sometimes we are the one speaking, and other times we are listening. Either way, the central tenet is communication for the sake of building the relationship and making it stronger. And here’s what’s exciting: If we just communicate, we can get by. But if we communicate skillfully, we can work miracles!

**Friendliness.** Put simply, relationships just work better when we are friendly with others. Being friendly can cushion the bumpy ride we sometimes experience in our relationships. Cheerfulness goes a long way toward building lasting relationships. I mean, nobody wants to be around a grump, do they? The fact is that the friendlier you are, the more you are going to have people who want to pursue longer-lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with you. So cheer up, put on a smile, have kind words to say to others, treat people with a great deal of friendliness, and you will see your relationships improve.

**Patience.** People being people, we have an awful lot of time for practice in the area of patience. People are not perfect and will constantly fail us. And, conversely, we will fail other people. So while we try to have more patience for others, we need their patience as well. So often, I think relationships break down because people give up and lose patience. I am talking about all kinds of friendships, marriages, business relationships, etc. Recent research has shown that those marriages that go through major turmoil and then

make it through are very strong after doing so. Patience wins out. Those who give up on relationships too early or because the other person isn't perfect often forget that their next friend, their next spouse or business partner will not be perfect either! So, we would do well to cultivate this skill and learn to have more patience.

**Loyalty.** Loyalty is a commitment to another person. Sadly, loyalty is often a missing element in many relationships today. We have forgotten what it means to be loyal. Our consumer mentality has affected this to some degree. People are no longer loyal to a product. And, unfortunately, many companies are not loyal to their clients or patrons. Regrettably, this has spilled over into our relationships. It is one thing to switch brands of dishwashing detergent. It is another thing altogether to switch friends. Sometimes we just need to commit to being loyal and let the relationship move forward. We need a higher level of stick-to-it-iveness! This kind of loyalty will take our relationships to a much deeper level. What a powerful and secure feeling of knowing that you have a relationship with someone who is loyal to you and you to them—that neither of you is going anywhere even when things get tough. Wow—how powerful!

**A Common Purpose.** One of the basics of healthy relationships is to have a common purpose, and oftentimes this is a component that is initially overlooked, but for a long-term, long-lasting relationship it is vital. Think about how many friends you have met through the years while working on a common purpose. Maybe it was someone you met while participating in sports, while working on a political campaign, attending church, at your office, or anything that brought you together to work on a common purpose. You had that strong common bond of purpose that brought you together and held you together. Working together, building together, failing and succeeding together—all while pursuing a common purpose—that is what relationships are made of. Find people with whom you have common purposes and sow the seeds of great relationships, and then reap the long-lasting benefits.

**Fun.** All good relationships have some element of fun. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean loud, raucous fun, though that is appropriate for some relationships. But even in business relationships there should be some fun. It should be fun to do business with those who you are going to have a long-term business relationship with. Fun brings enjoyment to the relationship, and that is important. I think that oftentimes this key element can be easily forgotten or neglected in our family and spousal relationships. The fun things we did initially in a new relationship after a while can be taken for granted or simply fall by the wayside and we stop creating the fun and joy. So remember to consciously craft fun situations and moments, for these are the glue that hold our memories together and make our lives sweet.

There are so many key ingredients to making and maintaining great, long-lasting relationships. Each of the eight components we discussed brings unique dynamics and rewards to your relationships. Let's begin to focus on improving our relationships in these areas and see what miracles occur!