

Nurture Your Relationships ¹

Arnie Dahlke
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Appropriately, this Timely Tip is being published on Valentine's Day.

The smooth functioning of groups of people, from families to large corporations to the government depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships.

In organizations, the relationships that people form with other people are the core building blocks for developing effective organization-wide teamwork. Relationships affect communication throughout an organization, how work is done, and, ultimately, the level of customer satisfaction.

The overall quality of that network of relationships influences how effectively people work together. It is, therefore, important that everyone cares for and nurtures their relationships, keeping them healthy and productive.

So, how do you nurture relationships? How do you build and maintain quality relationships?

1. Respect the Other Person

To begin with, recognize that each person has his or her own talents, skills, preferences, tastes, habits, viewpoints, beliefs, attitudes, and so on. These characteristics define a person's individual uniqueness. *Respect the uniqueness of other people.* Focus on the value they bring to your interactions. Give them your full attention when you're with them. Recognize their uniqueness in front of others.



Let them know that you see them as important. Remember: it will be virtually impossible for you to make another person feel important when you secretly feel that he or she is insignificant!

2. Develop Mutual Trust

Quality interactions are grounded in mutual trust. Respecting another person establishes the groundwork for developing that trust. But, more needs to be done. Trust is earned. Earn it by living up to the commitments you make to other people. Don't make promises you cannot keep.



Listen to them with empathy, letting them know you are paying attention to their feelings. Be open with them about your own feelings and opinions without attacking theirs. Give them honest feedback in constructive ways that will not assault their personal dignity.

¹ From: <http://arniedahlke.com/timelytips.htm> —Please take a moment to look at Arnie's site: www.arniedahlke.com

3. Communicate With Self-Awareness.

Recognize that your communication with other people is affected by *how you perceive and feel* about what is happening during your interaction with them.



Do you see yourself being attacked? Does it seem to you that the other person does not appreciate what you do? Do you see someone discounting you? Such perceptions tend to stimulate negative feelings that then affect what you say to people and how you express it. Realize that your feelings are not something someone puts into you. You, yourself, own them.

Remember, you, and only you, choose your words, your tone of voice, your nonverbal behavior. The more you are self-aware of what is going on inside you, the more control you will be able to exercise over the way you communicate.

4. Actively Listen To People

Active listening is more than just hearing words. As an active listener, you consciously try to understand what someone is saying, not just hear the words.

Avoid any distractions and keep yourself focused on the person who is communicating to you. Don't allow yourself to miss what is being said because you are so busy thinking about what you will say in return as the other person is speaking.



Truly understanding what other people are communicating means being able to “put yourself in their shoes.” In other words, *try to view what is being talked about from the other person's perspective.*

5. Share Experiences

It is difficult to develop quality interactions with someone you do not know. The most successful teams—whether sports teams, surgical teams, military teams, or any other teams—are teams in which team members have shared many experiences. Much of that shared experience comes from working with them over a period of time.



But you can do more. Strive to *make connections with your workmates.* Spend time with them. Get to know them. Find things out about them that connect you. Go to lunch with them. People will connect with you when you demonstrate by your actions that you are interested in them and you care about them.

These are just a few ways to nurture relationships and develop quality relationships. You can always tell when you have a quality relationship with another person. You feel relaxed, at peace, rewarded, pleased, excited, and free of tension, anxiety, or anger. You can be yourself without any fear of embarrassing yourself or being attacked. You never have to give up who you are for the other person.

Any organization will become a more effective organization-wide team when all of its networks of interactions are characterized by quality relationships.



NURTURE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS!