

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

RESPECTING RELATIONSHIPS

Close relationships keep us grounded.

Social connections and strong, loving relationships are the strongest predictors of happiness. Close relationships keep us grounded and provide the encouragement and support we need to weather life's challenges. In fact, research shows that people who are lonely and isolated are more likely to suffer from depression, dementia, heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses. Lonely people may even be at greater risk for an early death.

Clear and open communication is essential for a happy, healthy relationship. It's the best way to establish trust and increase emotional intimacy. One of the first rules is to become a better listener. Active listening involves focusing on what the person is saying and understanding his or her point of view without judgment or interruption.

Respect is the foundation of every healthy relationship.

Here are some tips for building and maintaining strong relationships at home and work:

- **Be reliable, honest, and trustworthy.** Keep the promises you make, and do what you say you're going to do. Being reliable fosters trust.
- **Maintain healthy boundaries.** Everyone needs privacy and a degree of autonomy. Healthy boundaries are maintained when individuals respect each other's limits.
- **Show appreciation.** Everyone likes to be appreciated, but it's easy to take people for granted. If it's been a while since you last expressed appreciation, now is the time to start. It can be as simple as a thank-you, a compliment, or noticing and acknowledging what someone does for you.
- **Apologize when you're wrong.** Sincerely expressing remorse and accepting responsibility when you've made a mistake or have hurt someone helps to clear the air and repair the relationship.
- **Deal effectively with conflict and disagreements.** Conflict is inevitable in any relationship. Successfully working through conflicts and disagreements involves empathy and good communications skills. Focus on the problem at hand without bringing up old issues; listen carefully to each person's point of view, and look for common ground. If arguments get too heated, call a time out for people to collect themselves.

