HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Try putting others first as a way to deepen and improve your relationships.

Perhaps you feel locked into your current perceptions of other people in your orbit— family, friends, and work colleagues. However, do you realize that you have the capacity to improve your connections with others?

Our relationships will prove less than fulfilling if we don't make an effort to deepen, nurture, and strengthen them. Here are some ideas on how to create more positive relationships with those around you.

- **Treat others with kindness and respect,** just as you would like to be treated (i.e., the Golden Rule).

- **Show interest in and appreciation for others.** Those who take an active interest in others' lives — not talking only about themselves — are often the most valued people in the room. Ask people questions about their activities, and express your encouragement and admiration for their efforts.

- **Expand your circle.** If you limit your social circle to just a few individuals, you might miss out on the great diversity of people all around you. Make an effort to gain more friends, and in time you'll find interesting people who match up well with you in such areas as personality, shared interests, and values.

- **Strive to be a giver.** Transcend the common "What's in it for me?" interpersonal ethic by giving back something of equal or greater value to others. Giving instead of taking is always best. Invest in your relationships with time, caring, and a little self-sacrifice now and then.

- **Do some basic relationship-building.** Try to spend at least a little time each day building positive rapport with others around you, including people at work. Like many new habits, it can take time to master, but it will have positive interpersonal effects. For example, offer an unexpected kindness or strike up a conversation with someone at work who's new to you.

- **Be respectful, even during conflict.** While disagreements are uncomfortable, you can preserve and improve relationships if you show respect despite your opposing view. Avoid yelling, name-calling, sarcasm, and insults. These can damage relationships. Also, be quick to forgive others.

- **Listen actively,** without distraction, so you understand the concerns, needs, and priorities of others in your life.