

Youth often search for their own personal identity, which will be mostly shaped by peers - *people of similar age who share similar interests*. Relationship with peers and friends influences one's health and wellbeing.

Why do we need friendship?

Having good relationships brings happiness in life. Friends form an integral and important part of our lives and give meaning to life. They act as stress busters and good support system when faced with difficulties. One can learn a lot from friends thereby helping in our growth. However, it is not possible to even imagine a close relationship without any issues. If not handled well, this alone can become a major stress. Understanding these problems and knowing how to deal with them will help us maintain relationships in a healthy way.

If you are isolated...

If you don't have close relationship, ask yourself whether you are aware of it? Or you are denying it by saying that it is not important to have friends. You might blame others for not maintaining good relationship. In that case, which is true? Is it that everyone else has problem or is it reflective of your

problem? There are various reasons which makes it difficult to have relationships.

- **Workaholic:** Paying too much attention to academics or career and neglecting relationships instead of having a balance between the two.
- **Self centeredness:** Not concerned about others and involving in self centred activities.
- **Shyness:** Fear of appearing foolish in front of others. They forget the fact that nobody is perfect and everybody makes mistakes.

Choosing a friend

We may not be able to choose a friend. Usually it just happens due to various reasons such as someone with whom we talked first in the class, who is sitting near us, who is staying in our neighbourhood etc.

Still we can control ourselves from getting into wrong company. Once we become friends with them, we may also start accepting things which we are not supposed to. Therefore we can have a check on our company. A relationship is unhealthy if it does not lead to our growth, or is in conflict with our values. There occurs a pressure for doing things which you are not comfortable with or don't accept e.g, use of drugs, bunking class, copying in exams etc. It is very

essential to say 'NO' in such conditions. You may hesitate to say no due to fear of rejection. But remember, just by saying no to things that you disagree, a good friend will not reject you. Instead they will respect you. Otherwise we have to let go off the relationship!!!

Essential Components of Friendships

- **Sensitivity to others emotions:** Try to understand others' feelings within the context.
- **Empathy:** Putting oneself in someone else's place and experiencing their feelings.
- **Self disclosure:** Sharing our positive and negative experiences with someone.
- **Express emotions:** Both positive and negative emotions have to be expressed. While expressing negative emotions, of course, one has to keep in mind the consequences it can have.
- **Reciprocity:** Love has to be exchanged mutually. When we expect somebody to love us, we should think how much we are giving it back.
- **Communication:** Having open and clear communication not only helps in strengthening the bond but also clarifies misunderstanding. Have more positive communications such as

appreciating, valuing, giving compliments which can bolster the relationship.

- **Listening:** Develop active listening, where the listener is very much involved in what the other person is saying. It is an essential component of improving mutual relationship.
- **Tolerance:** Learn to tolerate the shortcomings of others.
- **Acceptance:** There are certain behaviours of individuals that cannot be fully changed such as shyness, slowness, the style of talking, walking etc. We cannot force anyone to change according to our wishes. Therefore, we have to accept the other person with their limitations.

• **Adjustment:** No relationship can flourish if you are not ready to compromise. You should be willing to take initiative to compromise rather than expecting the other to do it.

- **Being Non-judgmental:** Having a flexible and open mind will help us to be non-judgemental.
- **Honesty and Genuineness:** Lying and cheating are exposed very soon no matter how hard you try to cover and soon people will stop trusting you and

they will avoid you. To have friends for long time you need to be honest and genuine.

- **Have realistic expectations:** Our expectation about others should match with the reality.
- **Self-regulation:** Sometimes we have to control our expression of emotions and thoughts when we know that it might hurt the relationship.
- **Do not avoid:** If there is some misunderstanding, try to find out what is bothering your friend than avoiding. Communicating openly and clarifying doubts will help in solving the problems.

Maintaining Healthy Peer Relationships



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