

Understanding Your Relationships

A relationship is simply your connection with some thing or some person, including yourself. We use “relationships” to help us categorize our personal experiences and remind us how we should behave in certain situations. We should behave differently in an intimate relationship than in a business relationship. Everyone has lots of relationships. Some of the more common relationships include parent-child, sibling, marriage, work, and self.

Relationships give us an idea of what our connection is to a particular person, place or thing. When we are with our parents, we know it is a parent-child relationship. When we are with our spouse, we know it is a marriage relationship. When we are at the office we are engaged in work relationships. Each relationship is different and has its own set of rules of engagement. Some of these rules are by social custom but most are created by the parties themselves.

Each relationship is different. A father’s relationship with his son is different from his relationship with his daughter. A mother’s relationship with her son or daughter are different from her husband’s relationship with each of them. The relationships are different and the experiences of the parties are different. Most parents say they treat all of their children the same. But if you were to ask the children, they would say mom or dad treated so and so differently. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant. That is their experience of the situation.

Tension and conflicts arise when one party wishes to change the dynamics of the relationship and the other does not want to change. The children have all grown up and gone off to college. The wife now wants to go back to school and join the work force. The husband disagrees because it makes him feel like he is unable to provide for his family. One party wants to change the relationship and the other does not, so there is conflicts and tension. An adult child is married and has children of his own. Yet when he

interacts with his father, his father continues to treat him like an eight year old child. The adult child wants to change the relationship from parent-young child to parent-adult child. If the father doesn't want the relationship to change, conflicts and tension arise.

Relationships change over time. When the parties don't or are unwilling to see that the relationship has evolved to a different stage and now requires a new method of interaction, there is pain. The unwillingness to see is the same as refusing to change because the evidence is right in front of you.

Another common area of tension and conflict is where the parties have more than one type of relationship with each other, but in different settings. A married couple may also work for the same company. If they carry their marriage problems to the office, it affects their work relationships and the smooth running of the office. Likewise, when disagreements at work are carried back to the home environment, it affects the home's peace and harmony.

Understanding all your different relationships and being able to keep them separate will give you greater peace of mind and more fulfilling experiences.

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