Compass

You can improve your relationships

Good relationships don’t just happen. Sometimes it seems like your relationships with friends, partners, family members and coworkers are set in stone—and unlikely to change. But you can strengthen these important relationships and move them forward by taking some simple, proactive steps.

A relationship can become static and stale if neither party takes the time to listen, understand and value the other person. As individuals we’re all different—even within a close family unit—so it helps to learn to accept both the ways that we’re the same and the ways in which we differ from others. Learning to manage our differences and compromise can be valuable skills in friendship, in romance, in families, and at work.

In this issue of Compass, we examine:

• Ways to cultivate supportive friendships that can last a lifetime.
• Simple steps you can take each day to improve the interpersonal dynamics of your family.
• How you can use communication skills such as active listening to enhance all of your relationships.

Log on and learn! Visit the Magellan member website, look for Relationships under the Library/In the Spotlight section. There you’ll find ideas and information that can help you have healthier, stronger and more enjoyable relationships.

Value and nurture your friendships

There are many ways to help your friendships grow over the long term.

• Try to be more conscious of your friendships. Sometimes we get busy and forget our important friends. Remember that you might lose touch if you don’t reach out.
• Make an effort to overlook a friend’s shortcomings or eccentricities. Accept them as they are. Appreciate what makes each of you unique.
• Be respectful, even when you disagree. Don’t use harsh language or sarcasm to criticize a friend.
• Be willing to apologize when you are wrong about something. Don’t hold onto the conflicts or missteps of the past. Focus on the present and move forward.
• Be there in good times and bad. Enjoy the good times together, but more importantly, make yourself available when a friend is struggling and needs help.
• Show your appreciation. Remind friends once in a while that they mean a lot to you.

Go Online to Access More Information!
Strengthen family dynamics

It’s never too late to work on improving the interpersonal environment of your home. Making positive changes in how you communicate with household members can result in a more comfortable, loving family dynamic. Here are some ideas on strengthening family bonds.

Listen closely and learn
Try not to rush from activity to activity. Give your loved ones your undivided attention. Take time to ask questions, learn about each other’s day, help with problem solving, and provide encouragement.

Stick with the Golden Rule
In your relations with partners and children, remember to treat everyone with the same level of respect that you would want extended to you. For example, if you don’t like being impulsively and/or harshly criticized, refrain from doing that to others in your home.

Be careful with language
Don’t use name calling, labeling or blaming of others in your family. If you disagree with something a child has done, express your disapproval of the behavior, not the child. If your patience is running thin, take a moment to step back and calm down before speaking.

Make family time
Sometimes family members lose touch with each other because they’re so busy. Despite packed schedules, plan at least a little family time each week such as movie night, game night, outdoor sports night, etc. Also, strive to have dinner together as often as possible.

Honor differences
Try not to micromanage kids’ lives. Give them the freedom to build their own identities and make mistakes along the way. Show that you’re interested in the things that make them unique, and communicate your unconditional love.

Improve relationships through communication
Everyone can work on improving their communication skills. Better communication with partners, children and coworkers can strengthen relationships. Some tips:

Listen actively—Focus on understanding a speaker’s points. Repeat and clarify what the speaker has said. Push distractions aside.

Be encouraging—offer encouragement and enthusiastic praise to others. Show that you value and appreciate them.

Engage children and teens—Ask open-ended questions that require more than a one-word “yes” or “no” answer. Ask youngsters for opinions about their recent experiences, current events or favorite entertainment.

Keep things light—Break the ice with tasteful humor. This helps cut stress and put people more at ease with you. To encourage positive interactions, remember to smile.