

## Navigating Relationships

Need help navigating friendships and relationships? We are created to be in relationship with people. The people we find the greatest support from at times can also hurt our feelings or disappoint us. Relationships sometimes have a season in our lives and then someone might move away or for some other reason not have the same availability to spend time with us. All of these types of transitions and difficulties are painful. Relationships are life giving and also difficult.

Here are a few tips on how to manage relationships:

- Get to know yourself:
  - What are your preferences?  
What do you like to eat? What recreation activities are fun for you? If you do not know your own preferences, you might morph into whoever is around you in an attempt to fit in. So learn what you like and dislike and how to communicate your preferences and also be flexible and adaptable with others.
  - What are your values?  
Do you value honesty and integrity? Do you value making money? Do you value exercise and nutrition? Your closest friends should share similar values. If you do not know your own values, you might find yourself doing things that you regret. If you do know your values it gives you a foundation for making sound decisions in life.
- Decide what is a good friend, and then choose good friends:
  - What kind of friend do you want to be?  
You can't control others, but you can manage yourself. Do you want to be a loving and supportive friend? Do you want to be a fun friend? Do you want deep conversations? Do you want to be sports-oriented friend?
  - What kind of friend do you want HAVE?  
Take some time to hang out with people and get to know them until you have found friends that fit your lifestyle and value system.
- Take steps to cultivate friendship:
  - Initiate - Often people wait to be invited but end up feeling rejected. If you want friends, consider reaching out and taking initiative. Be confident and start conversations by asking questions to get to know the other person.
  - Vulnerability - Know that friendships grow and strengthen as vulnerability grows in the relationship. Keep in mind that not everyone will be your best friend. We will have those in our inner circle who are emotionally safe and have shown their trustworthiness, consistency, honesty and kindness to us. Then there will be those who are maybe just outside our inner circle with whom we have common interests and we have built some trust with, but they are not privy to our innermost struggles. And then there are those in our outer circle who have not earned our trust or have betrayed it, and therefore those people do not have access to our vulnerability. Not everyone has earned the right to be in your inner circle and not everyone gets total access to you. It is OK to have boundaries.

- Time - Remember that it takes time to build deep friendships. Qualities like trust, loyalty and vulnerability are also built over time. It is a process to learn others' character and values, and for them to learn about ours. Frequently, we can learn about a person's true character and value when we see how they handle conflict in their life. We are all growing and maturing and over time our values might change too.

So as you keep getting to know yourself and improving your self-worth, you will gain the confidence to be your genuine self with others and others will be encouraged to be their genuine selves with you. As a result, you will build deeper and stronger relationships.