

THE POWER OF POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are key to happiness. When they are in harmony we feel connected, supported and energised. When they are in conflict it impacts negatively on our happiness.

- **To assess the quality of relationships in your life there are a number of key relationships you need to think about**

- Self - Partner - Family - Friends - Work

Central to all these relationships are healthy boundaries, trust, openness and a passion to give to others in terms of listening, support, and empathy. The following tools will help you to examine the five key relationships in your life and be honest and open with yourself about the state that they are in.

UNDERSTANDING POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

- **Honest, respectful communication is central to healthy relationships. In healthy relationships people:**
 - ◆ Talk favourably about each other in social situations
 - ◆ Respect the other person's individual preferences
 - ◆ Take interest in one another
 - ◆ Go beyond the small talk and seek deeper understanding
 - ◆ Engage in active listening
 - ◆ Articulate their needs assertively and respectfully

■ Healthy Relationships

Characterised by equal proportions of give and take. Power is shared equally. Each individual helps the other to develop, nurture and grow, which in turn allows the relationship to grow. Conflicts are dealt with quickly and ill-feeling does not fester.

■ Intrusive Relationships

Intrusive relationships are characterised by imbalance, where one person exerts power over the other. Sometimes this power is overt and manifests itself through a control of finances or a display of physical strength. Alternatively, power can be exerted covertly, in ways that are subtle yet still destructive. Imagine someone in your life that you love but don't like – this can happen and is often indicative of an intrusive relationship.

■ Key Question

Do your family or friends give you little praise, put you down, embarrass you in front of your friends or in public, constantly criticise you, or talk negatively to you? If yes, then your relationship is toxic.

TIPS TO MANAGE TOXIC PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

- ◆ Put your own needs first, so that you remain healthy to cope with the demands of toxic people in your life.
- ◆ Demonstrate no interest in gossip or negative self-talk.
- ◆ Use 'problem free' talk and stick to neutral topics.
- ◆ You have the right to leave toxic relationships, whether with a partner or a friend.
- ◆ When it comes to your family it can be hard to leave toxic relationships behind. The strategy is to reduce the toxic dose by setting clear boundaries while building your self-confidence, inner strength and emotional independence.
- ◆ Clear boundaries include learning to say no without feeling the need to offer an excuse and limiting the amount of time you spend with a toxic person.