

# AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

## Living Well



- Put your devices away and on silent when with family or friends for agreed periods, and give your full attention without distraction or preoccupation.
- Suspend negative judgements, avoid criticising and focus on the positives (research links this to us having happier and longer marriages/partnerships).
- Make more thoughtful and affectionate comments to friends and family – research links this to lowering both the giver and receiver’s cortisol (stress) levels.
- Train yourself to share your feelings and emotions in a constructive manner. ‘When you X, I feel Y’ is a basic starting point.
- Positively reminisce over favourite holidays, special occasions, good times, happy memories, funny experiences, etc. with the people who are important to you in your life. Crystallise the details and enjoy the accompanying positive emotions as a reminder of the good times and special bonds you share.
- Make time to ask and really listen to the key people in your life, show them you are interested, watch out for complacency and remember if you feel your family are the most important thing in your life, make sure your behaviour honours this – don’t put your loved ones last on your list, and don’t take them for granted.
- Write a letter or note to someone who has touched you deeply in your life and tell them the impact they have had on you and express your gratitude. Send the note and don’t leave it too late!
- Hug your loved ones every day. Touch releases happy hormones.
- Sometimes we need help with our relationships. If you are experiencing significant challenges and/or loneliness and isolation, consider seeking professional input to talk things through (or a trusted friend as a starting point).

“HUG YOUR LOVED ONES EVERY DAY. TOUCH RELEASES HAPPY HORMONES.”

- There is a link between positive micro-connections (momentary interactions with others throughout the day) and our white blood cell count. Think of this the next time you pay for a coffee, pass a stranger, get into a lift – what are the marks you are leaving on others’ faces? A smile, complete eye-contact, a positive verbal exchange – these might all be building your immune system and that of the recipient.
- Think about your closest friends – when did you last speak to or see them? Make a commitment to create an opportunity for this to happen in the next week.
- Look for an opportunity to contribute to someone else’s happiness – this could be something big or something small. Think about what will create this emotion in someone you are close to and put this into action.
- Reflect on how your work may be impacting your relationships with friends and loved ones. How long will these relationships be sustained if you continue with the same approach? What do you need to change to nurture these relationships for the long term?
- Take proactive steps to form new relationships. Consider what you’re looking for in a friendship or partnership, and what steps you could take to increase the probability of finding this. Be open and curious to what new people can bring to your life.