



Modern Whig Party of America

Whig Academy

Lesson 6:

Enhancing Personal Relationships

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Introduction

Welcome to the lesson Enhancing Personal Relationships. No matter what aspect of your life you consider, a relationship will most likely be involved. Whether you are at work, with your family, or at a parents' organization meeting, you will need to develop skills to effectively participate in the group. In this lesson we will discuss how you can build stronger relationships and meet new people.

In this Lesson

This lesson explains the characteristics of healthy relationships, actions that cause rifts in relationships, the definition of self-esteem, how to enhance and build self-esteem, how to make a good first impression, and the benefits of group membership and networking.

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Determine how to develop and maintain healthy personal relationships.
- Display self-confidence when meeting new people and working in a group setting.
- Identify benefits of being a supportive group member.

Personal Relationships

When you hear the term —relationships, what do you think of? Relationships can be defined as a particular connection, closeness, bond, liaison, link, or association.

Think about the types of the relationships you currently have or have had during your life. Are some of these relationships more important than others? If so, which ones are more important? and why?

Since most people have relationships that are more important than others, do you think you need to work harder at these relationships to keep them going, keep them healthy?

What do you need to do to keep those relationships healthy?

Healthy Relationships

What keeps relationships healthy? Click on each characteristic to learn more.

Courtesy

Treating others with courtesy and being understanding of their differences and diversity is definitely the most important element in building a professional relationship.

Respect

This is a two-way street involving respect for others as well as oneself.

Listening

More than hearing words, listening is hearing what the other person is saying and their point of view without interpreting, questioning, or challenging during the presentation of an idea.

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Politeness

The willingness to give domain to another and respect others' positions despite the fact that you may disagree with what they are saying, or their approach.

Willingness

Being willing to do any task you ask others to do is key to treating them with respect, and making sure they feel appreciated for the tasks they perform.

Sensitivity

Being sensitive to different styles, cultures, and mannerisms is the foundation of relating to people who are different from you. In the MWP, individuals from a variety of backgrounds come together in a common culture. Sensitivity is key to relating to all in a positive way.

Encouragement

Encouraging people to set their own goals and objectives, and lean on the group when necessary, is the best way to ensure people find their strengths.

In a perfect world we would all want to bring these items to every relationship we have to ensure that we keep ourselves and others happy. But we all know we don't live in a perfect world, and so there are things that come up in our relationships that might tear down what we have built up.

Rifts in Relationships

Here are some non-productive actions that might cause a rift in our relationships:

Aggression

Working for status by criticizing or blaming others; showing hostility to others; deflating the ego or status of others.

Self-confessing

Using others as a sound board; expressing inappropriate personal feelings or points of view.

Competing

Vying with others to produce the best ideas all the time; to talk the most; own ideas are always the best.

Rifts in Relationships

Here are some non-productive actions that might cause a rift in our relationships:

Recognition seeking

Attempting to call attention to one's self by loud or excessive talking, extreme ideas or unusual behavior.

Special pleading

Introducing or supporting suggestions related to personal concerns or philosophies; always lobbying for own way.

Clowning

Always joking and mimicking others; not taking things seriously.

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Rifts in Relationships

Here are non-productive actions that might cause a rift in our relationships:

Seeking sympathy

Trying to gain others' sympathy for one's problems or misfortunes; deploring one's own ideas to gain support.

Withdrawing

Acting differently or passively; resorting to excessive formality; daydreaming or doodling and not paying attention to others as they are speaking; wandering from the subject.

Degrading

Acting in a manner that criticizes others.

These actions are often the result of behaviors that individuals develop to deal with the world around them. These behaviors may not be positive, but in some way they are allowing individuals to gain an advantage or meet a need.

Building Stronger Relationships

One of the challenges in building stronger relationships will be to help others—and maybe even ourselves—find positive ways to achieve goals and meet needs. This path will lead to fewer hurt relationships.

We've discussed how to keep relationships healthy and how to prevent damaging what we have built up in a relationship. One aspect of building relationships begins with yourself and how you feel about yourself. You have a lot of positive traits you bring to relationships.

It might seem curious to ask questions about yourself when you are focusing on relationship building skills, but they are important. You see, YOU are the first person in building a relationship. Therefore, it is important for you to emphasize personal awareness and develop a clear picture of yourself.

Self Esteem Definition

Click on the dictionary for a definition of self-esteem.

Self-esteem:

- Confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the basic challenges of life.
- Confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts.

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Self Esteem

Self esteem is the opinion you have of yourself. It is based on your attitude to the following:

- Your value as a person.
- The job you do.
- Your achievements.
- How you think others see you.
- Your purpose in life.
- Your place in the world.
- Your potential for success.
- Your strengths and weaknesses.
- Your social status and how you relate to others.
- Your independence or ability to stand on your own feet.

Self Esteem

Self-esteem is related to yourself worth and your value. Building self-esteem is a first step towards your happiness and a better life.

Self-esteem increases your confidence. If you have confidence, you will respect yourself. If you respect yourself, you can respect others and improve your relationships, your achievements, and your happiness.

Low self-esteem causes depression, unhappiness, insecurity and poor confidence. Others desires may take preference over yours. Inner criticism – that nagging voice of disapproval inside you – causes you to stumble at every challenge and challenges seem impossible.

Self Esteem Enhancers

Here are some ways to enhance your self-esteem:

1. It is quite "normal," and human, to hate making mistakes! That is why you may often feel embarrassed, deny their existence, and/or blame others for your errors. The best way is to admit your mistakes, learn from them, and take corrective action. After all, a mistake is a mistake - no more, no less.
2. Society emphasizes glamour and sex appeal. That is why most of us strive to achieve external beauty, but oftentimes we lose our uniqueness in the process. If you can accept the things you'd like to change without badmouthing or beating up on yourself, you have come a long way toward self-acceptance.

Self Esteem Enhancers

Here are some ways to enhance your self-esteem:

3. Taking responsibility for your own thoughts, words, and actions is more easily said than done. However, the quality of your well-being is directly proportional to how much self-responsibility you are willing to take. When you blame others or outside events for your position or

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condition in life, you lock yourself into a prison of pain. There truly is freedom in taking ownership for how you respond to what happens to you in life.

4. Your wants, needs and self-worth are as important as those of anyone else. However, that doesn't mean others will automatically respect them. If you silence your own voice, others will not know what you want or need. It's up to you to claim your needs as important and learn how to respectfully assert yourself. With practice, you'll be amazed at how this will become second nature.

Self Esteem Enhancers

Here are some ways to enhance your self-esteem:

5. Have you ever wondered "Why am I here?" or "What am I supposed to do in life?" If so, you're in very good company. This is one of the most fundamental life decisions you can make. Your purpose is about what you plan to achieve and the kind of person you want to be. Your character and your habits will lead you to be healthier, happier, and more successful. What are you good at? What do you really enjoy? These are two good places to look when you're trying to decide your direction. Your life has the potential to be so much more than you might imagine. The most important thing is that your life has meaning for you.

6. If you've ever heard the phrase, —your word is your bond||, you'll understand why honoring commitments are an aspect of healthy self-esteem. A commitment is a pledge; and a pledge is a guarantee. When you make a commitment to yourself or others, you're putting your integrity on the line. As you learn to demonstrate that you can be counted on to do what you say, you build your self-esteem and your credibility at the same time. That way you and others will know "you walk your talk."

Self Esteem Enhancers

Here are some ways to enhance your self-esteem:

7. If you're like most people, you say things to yourself you wouldn't tolerate coming from another person. Negative self-talk scares us out of taking positive risks so we can avoid failure. Here's how you can start to build positive, self-empowering inner dialogues. First, recognize your negative self-talk. Next, interrupt the pattern; tell yourself "Erase that. Here what I really mean!" The last step is to give yourself positive instruction, like "I can do this. I'm up to the task," or "Let's try it on for size." The more you're able to replace your negative self-talk with positive, the more your self-esteem and self-confidence will grow.

Self Esteem Enhancers

Here are some ways to enhance your self-esteem:

8. When you put more weight on your own judgment than on others, it's easier to keep their words in perspective without becoming defensive. Your strong sense of self-worth allows you

to maintain your power and still hear what others have to say without feeling bad about yourself.

9. When you meet people, it's a good idea to think about how you make eye contact. It's one of the first things people use to form an impression of you. There are many myths and interpretations about what direct eye contact, or a lack of it, means. The point here is that when you're interacting with others, they want to know the two of you have some connection. Direct eye contact is a great way to create a climate of harmony in any relationship and demonstrate your self-worth at the same time.

Review Exercise

1. Which of the following are productive ways to build and maintain healthy relationships?

Select all that apply.

- a. Respect
- b. Aggression
- c. Recognition seeking
- d. Willingness

2. Which of the following are non-productive ways to build and maintain healthy relationships? Select all that apply.

- a. Withdrawing
- b. Degrading
- c. Listening
- d. Encouragement [incorrect]

3. Select the correct definition(s) of self-esteem.

- a. Confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the basic challenges of life
- b. Confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts
- c. Both a and b
- d. Neither a nor b

4. What are some ways to enhance your self-esteem? Click all that apply.

- a. Admit your mistakes, learn from them, and take corrective action
- b. Claim your needs as important and learn how to respectfully assert yourself
- c. Recognize negative self-talk, and replace it with positive self-talk
- d. Make direct eye contact when you meet people

e. Make yourself as attractive as possible, even if that means plastic surgery

Self Esteem Builders

Here are some ways to build your self-esteem:

1. Believe in yourself. Success and happiness must be part of your self-image. One simple rule will help you do this: allow only positive thoughts to dominate your thinking.

- I am worthy.
- I like myself.
- I am strong and self-sufficient.
- I can handle what comes my way.
- I have high but realistic expectations of myself.
- I know the future holds opportunities for me.
- I take total responsibility for myself.
- I am confident that I have the power to confront and resolve problems.

Self Esteem Builders

Here are some ways to build your self-esteem:

2. Face your fears - they aren't as bad as you think they are. Facing your fears increases your confidence.

3. Learn from your failures. Avoid making the same mistakes again but don't limit yourself by assuming you failed before so you can't succeed this time. Try again, you're wiser and stronger. Don't be trapped in the past!

4. Know what you want and ask for it. You deserve your dreams to come true.

5. Reward yourself when you succeed. No-one else will! Isn't everything easier when you take time to help yourself?

Self Esteem Builders

Here are some ways to build your self-esteem:

6. Talk - We often make assumptions about a situation or person which are not true. Your attitude and behavior can be negatively affected so if you have any doubt or question ask and don't assume you know why or how.

Your view of yourself is often directly affected by your occupation, community involvement, and the other ways you spend your time. Being aware of yourself and the image you project to others is important. From self-awareness comes the confidence to work with others and build strong personal and professional relationships.

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Meeting New People

How does self-esteem relate to meeting new people? Communicating personally with your peers will set the tone of your relationships.

Being able to meet people and reach out to those you do not know is an important skill. In a military environment, where people move frequently and are often in situations where they are meeting new people, it is invaluable.

Meeting new people is more often than not a matter of putting yourself in other's shoes. Making them feel comfortable by your actions and conversation and finding the common ground are the first steps towards making an acquaintance or friend.

First Impressions

The old adage —First Impressions Count|| is really true – the initial meeting you have with a person can create a lasting impression. Therefore, it is important to get off on the right foot and create the best impression!

No one deliberately acts in an unfriendly or off-putting way when they first meet others, but sometimes it can be difficult to see us the way others do. When we meet people for the first time, we may be sending the wrong signals without knowing it.

Click on each image for tips on making a good first impression.

- Introduce yourself.
- Remember to smile.
- Make eye contact.
- Offer your hand.
- Give a nice, firm handshake.
- Ask and remember people's names.

First Impressions

The Necessity of Making a Good First Impression

The Necessity of Making a Good First Impression is an article by C.V. Doner, PhD that captures the importance of that first impression. Let's take a look at the major points.

We all want people to like us, whether it's a job interviewer, a potential client or customer, fellow classmates, club or church members or just a new acquaintance. Not only does their approval make us feel better about ourselves, the fact is, we may actually need their approval. They may well be the key to our financial, educational or relational success.

Even though we all want, need and perhaps even crave a positive assessment from those we have contact with, very few of us ask ourselves what kind of first impression we make upon meeting someone for the first time. Many think, "So what's the big deal about a first impression? I'll have other chances.|| In fact, you may not.

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First Impressions

A myriad of studies show that people make a judgment about you within four seconds! Since you can't say a whole lot in four seconds, you are instantly judged on a dizzying array of fronts: appearance (height, weight, grooming, and clothing) and body language (how you walk, stand, your eye contact, your hand shake, hand gestures, and other personal mannerisms). All of these communicate competence, self-confidence and charisma or insecurity, laxness and timidity. Even our overall energy level-effervescent or nondescript (read invisible), charismatic or timid, outgoing or withdrawn, will subconsciously register on the person you've met.

Everyone, including you, automatically screens people according to our largely unconscious "filters". For instance, if you're in your twenties looking for a "significant other", you normally won't even notice anyone over 30. If you're sizing up potential business colleagues or employees, those who lack an aura of confidence and professionalism won't register.

First Impressions

Many people feel "invisible", like no one really notices them. That's because they get "screened out" by almost everyone. Part of the problem may be an unappealing or nondescript appearance (for women: bad hair or no makeup, drab clothing; for men: unkempt, overweight and underdressed in the typical male uniform: T-shirt, jeans and tennis shoes. Combined with a passionless demeanor, this lack of personal attention can make you "invisible" to many.) Then of course, we open our mouth and confirm the negative judgment just received. We're opinionated-or worse, have no opinion, so we're perceived as vapid airheads or arrogant snobs.

First Impressions

Of course you can't be all things to all people, so you need to determine what type of person on whom you want to make a good impression on. People are attracted (personally as well as professionally) to people who appear to be similar. Those who at least seem to share the same standards and values subconsciously resonate with us. So if you're looking for work in a rodeo or a partner in a square dance, then a business suit won't help you much. Likewise, jeans and boots won't go over well with the Brooks Brothers set. Likewise, if a shy man is intimidated by "strong women", your charisma and confidence will be a turnoff. Target someone who appears to share your own exuberance.

Make Good First Impressions

How can you enhance your chance of making a great first impression?

1. Figure out whom you're trying to impress. Determine the appropriate "look and feel" you want to project.
2. Look your best. This means hair, teeth, face, eyes, nails, and clothes. And yes, clothes do make the man or the woman.

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3. Project confidence with direct eye contact and a firm (not crushing) handshake, good posture and a graceful walk.
4. Turn up your energy level. Get committed and passionate about something. No one finds a zombie attractive.

Make Good First Impressions

How can you enhance your chance of making a great first impression?

5. If you want people to be interested in you, you need to be interested in them. Most people will perceive anyone interested in them to be interesting! It also helps if you're interesting in your own right. This may mean developing a new or wide variety of interests beyond your job, kids, TV, or a singular hobby. Read widely – especially books on spiritual growth, self-improvement, psychology, religion and cultural issues. Be literate as well as informed. Read a daily newspaper and a weekly news magazine. Surf the net. Watch cable news or intelligent talk shows (not Jerry Springer!). Get involved in church or civic groups.

6. Most important of all, become self-aware. Know yourself and your purpose for being on the planet. Everyone respects someone who is clear and even passionate about their direction in life.

To continue, click on the person more likely to make a good first impression.

Group Relationships

Some relationships in your life are group relationships. The relationship you develop with other group members can enhance the effectiveness of these groups.

Why do we associate with groups? People do not usually associate with groups by chance, or for purely altruistic reasons. Membership in groups can satisfy any number of needs people have.

Let's look at some reasons people join groups. Are some of these familiar?

- A sense of a being a part of something.
- A feeling of being wanted.
- An opportunity to work with others.
- A chance to give of one's self.
- A chance to use skills and talent.

Group Relationships

To achieve success in a group, each member can contribute more effectively if he or she is:

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- Clearly aware of the group's mission.
- Sensitive to individual differences.
- Willing to listen to other's views.
- Considerate of others' interests and needs.
- Interested in the challenges and opportunities of other group members.
- Oriented to long-term progress and success.
- Trusting him/her and others on the team.
- Helping each other to be right, not wrong.
- Looking for ways to make new ideas work not looking for reasons why they won't.
- Helping each other to succeed and taking pride in the achievements and victories of others.
- Speaking positively about each other and about your organization at every opportunity.
- Maintaining a positive mental attitude no matter what the circumstances.
- Doing everything with vigor and enthusiasm -- it is contagious.

Networking

While people are building relationships with one another, they also build a relationship with the organization itself, especially when they are personally committed and involved with the goals of the organization. The next step in developing relationships is networking.

Networking is the interaction or informal communication with others for mutual assistance or support. Networking expands your capacity to assist other family members, and will make you more informed about the resources and support services in your area.

Networking Benefits

Networking has many benefits:

- Provides information about resources.
- Teaches you how to coordinate resources.
- Gives you a target for project opportunities, job-hunting, and volunteerism.
- Provides an opportunity to get information on a variety of subjects.
- Builds relationships with others.

Networking through the services in your community allows you to share ideas and gain knowledge about other programs, as well as expanding your network of colleagues.

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Networking Benefits

All of us have a network. Whether it is through our jobs, our community, or our church we all have a source for meeting people and building relationships – and this is the essence of a network. Building on these connections and learning how to utilize them for information and services are what networking is all about.

The most important part of networking is staying active in your community, often through volunteer work. This could include community and church activities, MWP activities and neighborhood groups.

Review Exercises

1. What are some of the best ways to make a good first impression? Click all that apply.

- a. Introduce yourself
- b. Smile and make direct eye contact
- c. Ask and remember people's names
- d. Give a nice, firm handshake
- e. Be yourself, so dress however you're comfortable
- f. Use an off-color joke to break the ice

2. What are some ways to be a successful, contributing group member? Click all that apply.

- a. Withdrawing
- b. Degrading
- c. Listening
- d. Encouragement

3. Select the correct definition(s) of self-esteem.

- a. Confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the basic challenges of life
- b. Confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts
- c. Both a and b
- d. Neither a nor b

4. What are some ways to enhance your self-esteem? Click all that apply.

- a. Admit your mistakes, learn from them, and take corrective action
- b. Claim your needs as important and learn how to respectfully assert yourself
- c. Recognize negative self-talk, and replace it with positive self-talk
- d. Make direct eye contact when you meet people
- e. Make yourself as attractive as possible, even if that means plastic surgery

Summary

Congratulations! This completes the lesson Enhancing Personal Relationships. In this lesson, you learned about the characteristics of healthy relationships, actions that cause rifts in relationships, the definition of self-esteem, how to enhance and build self-esteem, how to make a good first impression and the benefits of group membership and networking.

You should now be able to:

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- Determine how to develop and maintain healthy personal relationships.
- Display self-confidence when meeting new people and working in a group setting.
- Identify benefits of being a supportive group member.

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