



## HEALTHY BONDING

# Strengthening Your Relationships

The holidays often center on family gatherings, spending time with friends, and attending religious and community events. Meaningful social connections improve your health, make you happier, and promote longer life in the same ways as adequate, quality sleep or maintaining a good diet.

Connecting with others close to you has been shown to relieve stress that can lead to heart disease and other medical complications. People with strong interpersonal ties increase their chances of preventing premature mortality by 50 percent, according to a recent study from Brigham Young University.

Establishing positive relationships and keeping them intact is vital. Spend time supporting these relationships this holiday season by getting together with the people you care about most, and take part in activities that all of you enjoy.

In the next sections, we'll learn more about healthy relationships as they pertain to the following scenarios:

- Staying close as a family through dialogue with your children.
- Improving your communication skills in the workplace.
- Continuing to maintain and develop social ties with family and friends as you age.

---

## Family Interaction: Talking to Your Kids

Engaging in healthy communications with your children takes time and commitment. Children learn by example, so it is important to be a positive role model and to teach positive ways to communicate.

- When your children are willing to talk—be it at after school or during car rides—be sure you are completely present.
- Show interest in what they have to say and try to understand their perspectives. When they're finished, repeat their key points to make sure you've fully understood them.
- Be aware of your child's feelings when you respond and stay calm in expressing your opinion. Avoid arguing over who is right or wrong.

Another good way to bond and initiate conversation with kids is to share meals. Eating as a family creates a sense of stability, belonging, and mutual trust. So, turn off the television, silence your phone, and make dinner a positive time to share with your children.

In addition, be mindful of what your children seek from their conversations with you, such as advice in solving problems or dealing with their emotions. It's important to make them feel comfortable so that they will remain open with you.

*Sources: American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics.*

---



## Six Tips for Better Workplace Communication

Effective communication lies at the heart of successful relationships at work

### 1. Be Direct

Get to the point quickly with your messages. Everyone is busy, so make an effort to be respectful of your colleagues' time by being brief and clear. Nevertheless, politeness is integral for fostering mutual respect and collegiality at the office.

### 2. Stay Open-Minded

Be open to the perspectives and opinions of those you work with and be mindful that you may not always be right.

### 3. Face-to-Face When Possible

Technology is driving workers away from in-person encounters. Yet, endless emails back and forth can prove to be time consuming. Emailing generally works best for sending statements or routine requests to coworkers, but phone calls or meetings may be preferable for problem solving, which typically requires more dialogue.

### 4. Be an Active Listener

Communication is not a one-way street. Show interest in what others have to say by listening. When meeting in person, maintain eye-contact with the speaker and lean forward and/or offer a head nod and other small verbal cues. Such cues and responding constructively without interrupting are just a few keys to being a good listener.

### 5. Catch the Unspoken Cues

Words matter, but a significant proportion of communication is nonverbal. Simply smiling, standing up straight, and speaking confidently can work wonders in ensuring positive delivery of your messages.

### 6. Leave with a Clear Resolution

Work through problems with your coworkers and find common ground to compromise on a mutually satisfying solution. Try not to leave the discussion before hashing out loose ends.

Sources: American Psychological Association, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

## Healthy Ideas, Healthy Aging

### Staying Connected As You Age

Keeping relationships intact and continuing to develop new connections at an older age help you feel valued, cared for, and to have a sense of belonging.

Here are a few ways older adults can continue to engage in meaningful relationships and have quality interactions:



- Regularly connect with friends and loved ones
- Join a walking group or exercise class
- Participate in a book club
- Sign up for interesting classes
- Get involved at the local community center or place of worship
- Go on short trips with an organized group
- Spend time with friends playing cards, watching movies, going to sporting events, or other pleasurable activities

No matter how old you are, positive relationships with the people around you can help you feel young and vivacious. So, keep your social connections strong throughout life because they can make a big difference in your physical health and emotional well-being.

Employee Assistance Program  
24 HOURS A DAY

**1-800-222-0364**

(TTY: 1-888-262-7848)

**FOH4You.com**

Services are offered as a **FREE** benefit to you and your family members, and are confidential within the limits of the law.



# Better Relationships, Better Health

**Take time to nurture your most meaningful relationships this holiday season.** The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help you deal with the stress that may be keeping you from coming together with family and friends. And, it's never too late to start new relationships or rekindle old ones.

Contact your EAP for confidential advice on making your relationships better than ever so you can stay happy, stress-free, and healthy. EAP offers:

- **In person, short-term counseling** from licensed counselors.
- **Online information and interactive tools** on topics such as family/relationship issues, stress and coping, personal and emotional difficulties, workplace concerns, living a healthy lifestyle and more.

Employee Assistance Program  
24 HOURS A DAY

**1-800-222-0364**

(TTY: 1-888-262-7848)

**FOH4You.com**



**PSC**

**EAP**  
We care, <sup>SM</sup> **IL**

**FEDERAL  
OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH**

Services are offered as a **FREE** benefit to you and your family members, and are confidential within the limits of the law.