

The 7 'Cs' of Developing and Maintaining Healthy Relationships

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For any relationship to be sustained over a period of time you need to 'work' at it. If you apply the 7 'Cs' as outlined in this document then the likelihood of you developing and maintaining healthy relationships will be significantly enhanced. Remember some relationships are for a lifetime and others may only be for a season. Irrespective of the duration the following factors still apply.

1. Closeness

This does not just mean physically or geographically. This means that there is something in your relationship that enables you to be close. This is usually evident because you feel free and safe to talk about anything and everything that may be of concern to you.

This relates to the level of intimacy allowed in the relationship. If it is your life partner of course it will involve sexual intimacy, however for other relationships the other forms of intimacy are also important eg: emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

The level of closeness achieved will be determined by the nature, need and importance of the particular relationship you are involved in. They can also be influenced by your age, circumstance and experience. The mix in each relationship you establish will be different and each one is likely to fulfil a different need that you may have in your life.

2. Connectedness

This is about the relationship that exists between two entities or in this case two individuals (or more in some instances). What is it that draws you together? This can come about for a number of reasons; it could be simply that you are part of the same family. Alternatively it could be because you share a common interest such as gardening, bushwalking, quilting, faith or any number of other options.

This of itself will not necessarily sustain the relationship but it will certainly help to initiate it and get it off on the right foot.

3. Chemistry (Interpersonal Attraction)

This is the interpersonal attraction that exists between two people which can lead to friendships and in some cases romantic relationships.

This is often the factor that comes into play and determines how much we might like, love or hate someone. This is based on very personal considerations and indications. It has been described as something like an invisible force that can exist between two people which works on drawing them together.

It is often said to be when one person's qualities appeal to the desires of the other party whatever they might be. Remembering in some cases they can be romantic but that is not always the case. If there is a good match then this is most likely when a new friendship will be formed.

4. Co-operation

This is when a number of parties, at least two, agree to work towards a goal or objective rather than being in opposition. It is imperative to remember that the desire to co-operate in a relationship is usually mutually agreed if it is healthy. It is not coerced by one party onto the other.

In these instances it can be co-operation in agreeing to perform a task together, where you might go out for a shared leisure activity and any number of other possibilities. Having healthy boundaries could be an important factor here.

5. Communication

This aspect of a relationship can be the one most neglected however it is the one that is most crucial to the on-going sustainability of the relationship. It is important to try and establish an approach where the initiation and involvement in healthy communication is mutual and equal wherever possible. This may vary from one situation to another but each person needs to feel like they are heard and the other party cares about what they have to say.

Finding good places to talk without unnecessary distractions are important. Keeping in contact in between face to face get togethers helps to keep the relationship healthy and remind the other party that you are thinking of them and care about them even though you may not see them for awhile. Taking the time to follow up on cares and concerns they may have expressed to you can be helpful to the ongoing health of the relationship. There are numerous articles, websites and books that might help you with this aspect.

6. Compatibility

What this aspect relates to is that the parties in the relationship have some commonly shared values and beliefs. Whilst this is not an aspect commonly considered when thinking about relationships its importance cannot be underestimated.

Understanding values and beliefs is where common ground for developing the relationship can occur. It provides a firm foundation to build on.

The American Heritage Dictionary definition of compatibility (sourced on-line) states:

“harmonious, agreeable, or congenial combination with another or others”.

The words to note here are that it is harmonious, agreeable and congenial which means it is desirable and pleasurable for all parties concerned.

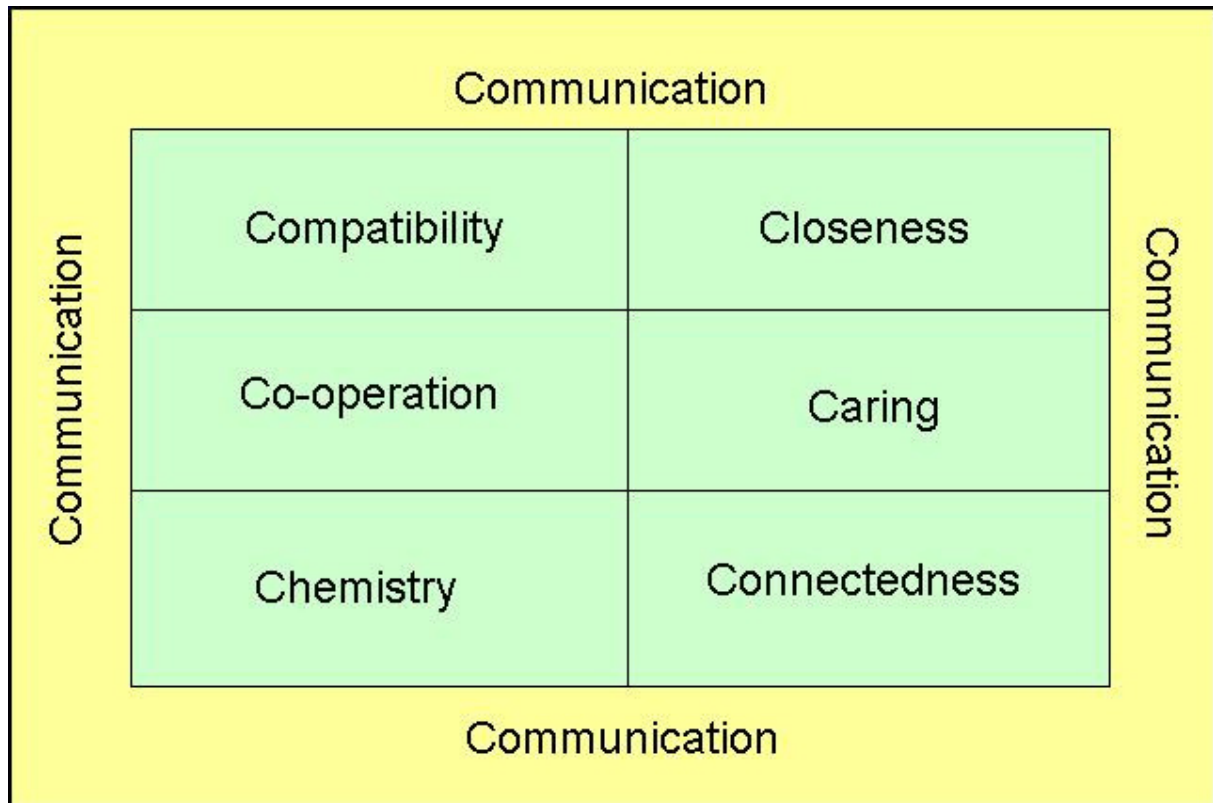
7. Caring

Depending on the nature of the relationship this can be a problem. Women are often well skilled in taking on caring roles. Unfortunately this can often be at their own expense. So they give to the other party but are not as inclined or willing to receive what others may wish to provide them. This is often seen in our response when someone gives us a compliment. This can be a difficult moment for people unless they have learned to accept the gift of a compliment like they may accept a birthday gift by simply saying thankyou.

Doing things for others just because you want to, and not out of a sense of obligation, is a way of showing caring. eg: sending them a “thinking of you’ note or a small unexpected gift, running errands when they cannot for some reason are all ways of showing you care.

If the 7 ‘Cs’ are maintained then you are likely to be able to establish, maintain and sustain health personal relationships. Communication could be said to be the one that underpins the relationship and the others rest on top of that.

The schematic included on the next page outlines how the various aspects relate together in order to assist in the development of healthy relationships.



See next page for skills development exercises.

Skills Development Exercises

The following exercises have been developed to further assist you in your exploration of how you can help to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Documenting your findings in a journal or notebook has been found to be highly beneficial.

- Below is a table where each 'C' characteristic has been included. Using a rating of 0 – non-existent, 3 – moderately developed, 5 – highly developed rate how these items exist within your current relationships.

Characteristic	Rating – Current	Rating - Desired	Action Required
Communication			
Closeness			
Connectedness			
Chemistry			
Co-operation			
Compatibility			
Caring			

Take 3 of your current relationships and do an inventory about the existence of these characteristics within those relationships. You will need to consider it from two perspectives ie: how you perceive it currently and then what you would like it to be. Then there is space to list any actions you may be able to take to make the type of adjustment you desire.

- Consider discussing the assessment you have made with the three friends you have considered as part of the previous exercise. You could do this by getting them to read this article and do their own assessment and then you could share your results. If there are any differences in perspective this could be a great starting point for discussing your relationship and enhancing the degree of health that currently exists within that relationship.
- If you are in the process of establishing a new friendship with someone document how understanding these aspects might help with establishing a good base for the relationship to build on. Would you consider sharing this information with your new friend and do you think it could help the relationship? If so, in what way? If not, what aspect might not be helpful?

If some deeper issues arise as a result of undertaking this assessment it could be worth considering seeing a relationship coach or counsellor who can help you with identification and application of any strategies you wish to implement in order to improve or maintain your relationship.

Acknowledgements & Further Reading

Carol McGowan is a successful coach and counsellor, based in Sydney Australia, who specialises in retirement lifestyle planning. She has been a significant leader in the development of askacoach.com from the beginning.

If you would like further information on this topic there are numerous websites which can help you in your search. Depending on where you reside there would be a wide variety of resources you could tap into. Investigating local community resources would assist you in identifying ones that will be of most help to you.

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