



Supportive Relationships

It almost goes without saying that supportive relationships bring happiness and boost resilience to stress and adversity. Friends, family and colleagues can provide all sorts of support during tough times, including emotional support, advice on problems; companionship and practical support (e.g. feeding your cat when you go on holiday).

Building and maintaining positive relationships requires on-going investment. And it's easy to neglect your social circle when things like work get in the way. Interestingly, men often need more of a nudge than women. Women tend to meet socially with no excuse needed, apart from the opportunity to chat, catch-up and offer support to each other. Men, on the other hand, often need more of an excuse like watching or playing sport or going to a concert. If this is an area you'd like to work on, you might have a look at our tips, resources and recommended reading below.

Social networks

- Arrange a night out ... find an excuse like some live music, a sporting event, a show, anything that interests you
- Join the local tennis club, yacht club, amateur dramatics society, any social group that appeals to you
- Start a book club
- Arrange a dinner party, with the people whose company you enjoy the most
- Tell someone how much you appreciate what they've done for you
- Volunteer
- Ask if someone needs help. In a well-documented study in the US, people who performed five acts of kindness in one day showed significant improvements in their happiness levels. Helping others is a great way to strengthen and build your social network
- For those working, we recommend attending networking events linked to your profession. For example, staff at Thrive will regularly attend events organised by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Business networking serves many purposes, it's not just about keeping up-to-date with your business or market or finding the next job, attendance also provides a sense of belonging and a great opportunity to socialise with like-minded people

Websites you might find interesting

- Volunteering: <http://www.do-it.org.uk>
- Social Clubs: <http://www.spiceuk.com/home#.UtPY-PuTa7o>
- Sports Clubs: <http://www.uksportsclub.com>
- Professional bodies in business and management: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/resources/a-z/professional-bodies>

Nurturing a loving relationship

The best tips I've discovered for nurturing a loving relationship come from John Gottman, a professor at the University of Washington and co-director of the Gottman Institute (www.gottman.com). In his research with married couples, he has been able to predict who will divorce with 90 per cent accuracy. Gottman also predicts which marriages will improve over time. Based on this research, Gottman suggests investing approx. five hours per week on the following activities. If these sound like common sense, that's probably a good sign:

- *Partings* – Before saying goodbye, find-out one thing you both plan to do during the day
- *Reunions* – At the end of each day, have a positive re-union conversation (i.e. discover what happened during the day)
- *Affection* – invest a few minutes every day in touching, holding and/or kissing – all laced with tenderness and forgiveness
- *One weekly date* – Spend time together, just the two of you in a relaxed atmosphere (this might be 2 hours per week)
- *Admiration and appreciation* – practice genuine affection and appreciation at least once a day every day (e.g. 5 minutes per day)

Further reading

- *The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work*. By John Gottman. Publisher: Orion; New edition (Jan 2007). ISBN-13: 978-0752837260.
- *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus: A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Your Relationships*. By John Gray. Publisher: Harper Element; New edition (Feb 2012). ISBN-13: 978-0007152599.
- *We Love Each Other, But...: Simple Secrets to Strengthen Your Relationship and Make Love Last*. By Ellen Wachtel. Publisher: Saint Martin's Press; 1st St. Martin's Griffin edition (Feb 2000). ISBN-13: 978-0312254704.