



MAY

Cultivating Healthy Relationships

Prioritize Your Mental Health & Well-Being in 2021

Mental illness has been stigmatized for years, making it difficult for those struggling to discuss how to combat illness-related challenges that make it hard to cultivate meaningful, healthy relationships. Relationships are complex and they require a level of commitment and time to ensure they work. Below, we have highlighted five tips that can help you improve your relationships and overcome inevitable mental obstacles.

BALANCING RELATIONSHIPS & YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

1. **Learning to Care for Yourself** — Individuals who face mental illness must remember to take care of themselves and prioritize taking the time needed to care for themselves. Think of it as an invitation to get to know yourself and your needs thoroughly, and to be thoughtful in how you will meet those needs. Whether it is scheduling extra time with a counselor or cutting back on obligations that can be rescheduled, prioritizing self-care can remove any barriers that are limiting your full potential.
2. **Monitor Negative Self-Talk** — Self-talk is your internal dialogue. It is influenced by your subconscious mind, and it reveals your thoughts, beliefs, questions and ideas. The societal stigmas associated with mental illness can cause people to develop negative self-talk, which often keeps individuals from speaking up about their needs and how they are feeling. Research shows that practicing optimistic self-talk on a routine basis can have several health benefits including increased vitality, greater life satisfaction, improved immune function, reduced pain, better cardiovascular health, as well as less stress and distress.
3. **Practice Healthy Communication** — Getting on the same page with your family, friends and colleagues can be difficult. Individuals in genuinely happy, healthy relationships understand that making open communication the heart of their dialogue is key to both celebrating the good moments and helping each other climb life's hurdles. Your well-being may depend on being able to speak up when you need help or space, which is why it is essential that you and your peers can have an open, honest conversation without fear of being judged or shut down. Practicing this form of communication helps everyone learn and grow together!
4. **Embrace Your Independence** — It is healthy to have a life that does not revolve around others 24/7. Independence and doing your own thing from time to time can help you avoid unnecessary stress in relationships, especially when you need time to think without outside influence. Embracing independence and learning to rely on yourself does not have to mean that you reject any form of dependence. Being able to form your own ideas about who you are helps your confidence and self-esteem, which in turn boosts your mental health and helps harness healthy relationships.
5. **Have a Support System** — There are three core groups that make up a strong support system — family, friends and professional colleagues. The level of support that you receive from each of these groups will vary, but they are all essential for a complete and reliable support system. With a mental health condition comes an invitation to figure out what helps you get through difficult moments. For instance, having multiple members within one's support system, each able to offer assistance in different areas, may be resourceful in overcoming your struggles. You may turn to one specific member to help you tell if your medication is working the way it is supposed to; you may turn to another to teach you coping skills that will help clear your head when going through a hard time.