

Have a Heart

“Love is the best medicine, and there is more than enough to go around once you open your heart.”

—Julie Marie

BY SAUNDRA PELLETIER

The greatest gift we can give anyone is the gift of acceptance. As we maneuver our way through life, we oftentimes find ourselves behaving as judge and jury to those whom we should simply accept. Each one of us has the opportunity to be a blessing to every life we touch yet fear and arrogance can prevent us from appreciating the unique differences in others.

A healthy heart is a heart without blinders. It is a heart that is large enough to love many individuals *because* they are different and to honor that which it does not understand, knowing that understanding is not required for acceptance.

The best way to maintain a healthy heart is by taking a candid look at how you view your relationships. Many times we find ourselves operating with old "tapes" based on our programming by our parents, our teachers, or a social group we belonged to 15 years ago, and we don't take the time to re-examine what we truly value.

Creating healthy relationships starts with our belief in our own worth. That belief begins with self-acceptance

and the knowledge that feeling good is our birthright.

One of the keys to creating lasting relationships is the ability to display *conscious competence* and *conscious incompetence*. In other words, you know what you know, you know what you don't know and you're confident enough to admit both. People love to be valued for their contributions and the wisdom they can impart to others. You can create this opportunity for them by simply saying, "Show me," "Explain that to me" or "Teach me." A healthy relationship is a two-way street. Give others the opportunity to open their hearts and minds to you.

Measure your own contributions by the weight of their impact on you and everybody you have the ability to influence. Always set your goals according to what *you* deem important. Be open to learning new things and embracing new ideas because once knowledge is gained, it can never be taken away.

A huge and important aspect of healthy relationships is taking the time to state out loud what we think is obvious. Think about how great you feel when a stranger compliments you unexpectedly. Every single day, find people doing something right and thank them for it, even if it's simply thanking your bank teller for prompt service. And please don't forget to thank those closest to you-- oftentimes the ones we take for granted the most. The smallest gesture can result in the biggest return.

On a clinical note, it's been proven that toxic relationships increase the risk of heart disease and that positive ones aid in prevention. An open heart is a healthy heart. So honor all your relationships, and by doing so, you and everyone around you can lead healthier, happier and more abundant lives. **B**

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