

Building Relationships That Matter

Sometimes relationships are taken for granted: We are busy with our own lives and issues, and we can forget to let the people we care about know how much we appreciate them. However, all it takes is a little effort and creativity to keep relationships alive and fun. Try the following ideas for relationships with family members, co-workers and friends.

Family

Your children look to you for guidance, acceptance and love. Use these tips to let your children know how special they are to you:

- Slip a little note into their lunch boxes, telling them how terrific you think they are.
- Every now and then, buy that special lunchtime snack they love, and sneak it into their lunch boxes.
- Turn a trip to the doctor into a mini field trip. After the appointment, go to the zoo, an historic part of your town or a children's museum.
- Every now and then, let your children decide what to serve for dinner, and help them to prepare it.
- Tell your child that he or she is loved often. It is vital to children's self-esteem.
- Turn a meal into entertainment. Make pancakes in the shape of a heart or a Mickey Mouse head, arrange food to spell out people's names, make meals with a theme, or eat in an unexpected place.
- Design a treasure hunt in your house with scattered clues that lead your children to little cards or trinkets.

Friends

Strong friendships, based on trust and respect, will survive the test of time. However, that doesn't mean your friendships shouldn't be fun. Use these ideas to keep your friendships strong:

- Listen when a friend mentions an item he or she has wanted; surprise him or her with it at a later date.
- Make it a rule to update your personal phone book every six months; it gives you a chance to catch up with old friends.
- Send a nice card for no reason other than to let your friend know how special he or she is to you.
- Don't shop for the holidays only in November and December; instead, purchase items you know a friend would enjoy, and save them for holiday gift giving.
- Think of a fun event or trip you and a friend experienced together; call him or her up and reminisce.

Co-workers

You spend a lot of time with people at work. Try these ideas to indicate how much your co-workers' relationships mean to you:

- Make their favorite foods as a surprise.
- Go to the dollar store and buy some fun toys for co-workers to keep on their desks.
- If you see a television show or magazine article that would interest a co-worker, email them a link to the show or bring in the article.
- Take on a job responsibility that a co-worker does not enjoy doing.
- If someone helped you out, let his or her supervisor know with a quick email.

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