The topic of relationship is one of the hottest topics in the country today. People everywhere are watching, listening, and reading about it because they want their relationships to be better. They do this because they want to have successful relationships. Despite the statistics on divorce, healthy relationships do exist. This month my pastor and his wife will celebrate 54 years of marriage. I am very close to another couple who have been married for over 60 years, and I have several friends and family members who have been married 30 or more years. If the media would focus it's greatest energy on the one half of marriages that do not end in divorce, more people would see building a successful relationship as a possibility.

In my quest to give the study of successful relationships the attention it deserves, this week I would like to share my 4 pillars of a healthy relationship. The pillars are honesty, trust, non-sexual touches, and meaningful communication. These 4 pillars are the bases for all healthy relationships. When two people come together an emotional bridge is created. This emotional bridge represents the feelings that they have for each other. Just as support is needed in a physical bridge, these feelings must be supported by underling principles. These principles serve as the foundation for the relationship, and they are supported by words and actions that work for the good of both people involved. These words and actions or pillars, are necessary for successful interaction.

The first pillar of a healthy relationship is honesty. It is the desire and ability to tell the truth without any intentions to deceive. This does not mean that a person has to tell everything that they know. Telling everything is a sign of immaturity. Children tattle tale, but mature adults only tell those things, good or bad, that are for the growth and development of the relationship. Honesty requires discretion. A husband telling his wife about an affair that took place during the marriage would be something that could work for the growth and development of the relationship, while telling her about all of his sexual escapades before marriage would not. In all cases, words that come out of a person’s mouth must be the truth. The pillar of honesty must run deep into the core of all those involved. Without this pillar the relationship will become unstable and eventually it will fall.

The second pillar of a healthy relationship is trust. Trust is what we do. Trust is established through, fidelity, loyalty, and respect. It is reinforced by the positive action a person takes for the good of the relationship. When actions are taken that violate trust, the relationship becomes unstable. This is a hard pill for some to swallow. Some people want be trusted, but have not taken the actions necessary to become trustworthy. Trust has to be earned. The one that has broken the trust has to be the one that takes the responsibility for rebuilding it. You can rebuild trust by doing what you say. Your actions must line up with your words. We all have in us the ability to be trustworthy, but we have to value the relationship enough to allow it to come forth. When it comes to a healthy relationship, trust is a must.

The third pillar of a healthy relationship is non-sexual touches. Touch is one of the most powerful of all the senses. The human body has over 30 thousand touch receptors located from the head to toe. These sensors are connected to nerves that are able to detect even the slightest touch. Non-sexual touches include hand holding, hugging, and cuddling. These healthy

interactions prevent a person from feeling like an object and more like a respected member of the relationships. Understanding the right use of non-sexual touches is vital to a healthy relationship. A child that is not held may become underdeveloped, and some men have gone from friend to felon in one night because of the incorrect use of touch. Because of the potential long term consequences that are involved in touching, this pillar is vital to any relationship.

The fourth and final pillar of a healthy relationship is meaningful communication. This is more than just talking to each other. Meaningful communication involves sharing goals and ambitions, hopes and aspirations, success and failures, and likes and dislikes. It is the opposite of arguing. Effective communication cannot be measured in the volume of words or by the length of the conversation. It exists when the words, thoughts, and ideas of both parties are respectfully received. It is the key element that holds all relationships together. When meaningful communication exists, the ability to resolve complex issues exists as well. Open communication serves as a bridge over relationship trouble.

You are the principle factor in your relationship equations. Continue to seek out positive information about relationships, and you will make your relationships better. When you improve yourself, you make the potential for a healthy relationship possible!

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