

MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS

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Relationship is the cord that binds society together, the quality of the relationship in a home determines the strength of the family and the resilience of the society to have mutual trust, sustainable peace and development.

This paper aims to look at the basis of relationship, various types of relationships and some factors that make for good quality relationship where everyone has a sense of belonging and fulfilment. Relationship is from two words: 'relation' and 'ship'; it is all about people who are bound together by necessity or by choice to be together and whose choices and decisions could affect others either positively or negatively and may also change the dynamics of the relationship. It is a people 'stuck' together, bound for a destination as though they are in a ship on the high seas where one person cannot cut out his/ her place in the ship and sail off; the ship would sink and the small bit cut would not get him/ her to safety.

THE BASIS OF RELATIONSHIP

Human beings, by nature, like all mammals are made to socialize among their kind and this is brought about either through being members of a family, as friends, members of a community (town, tribe, country, and race) or as one who sees himself or herself as a global citizen. Relationship therefore is about two or more people who are bound together in terms of emotional, social, cultural or developmental expectations.

Every relationship should have defined goals that capture the expectations and desired roles of the people. These are sometimes informally stated in social or friendly relationships but are more clearly stated in contractual relationships such as marriage, membership of association or business relationships; the constitution of a country is the larger form of contractual expectations and roles of government and citizens of a country. People can easily feel disappointed or let down when the other party or parties are not meeting with desired expectations if there was no mutual understanding on issues.

FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The very fabric of society is guided by the way people relate with each other and the attitude they have towards one another; it determines the level of trust, joy, happiness, peace that each person feels and the quality of hope that people have for the 'future'. While friendship is determined by two or more people choosing to relate with one another socially, being members of a community can either be by reason of a person being born as

an indigene of a community, citizen of a country or by a person choosing to adopt the citizenship of a country.

Social norms, socially acceptable standards of behaviours, cultural practices and civil laws guide the conduct and protect the interest of people in friendship and community relationships; this is why any agreement entered into between friends or in a community to do something that contravenes the civil laws or the constitution of the country is unlawful and not binding on either of the parties concerned.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

Family ties is said to be stronger and expected to be more dependable than the ties of friendship and acquaintances. In some cultures, it is assumed that everybody would retire to their home town at old age and so while one may sojourn in other places and keep oneself happy and fulfilled by socializing with other people, the family and home is always the place to go back to. The family starts with marriage between an adult male and an adult female, the family becomes larger as children are born into the marriage while they also maintain ties with the relatives of the man and wife, these are the in-laws and extended family ties.

When children are young, the parents' responsibility is to give them protection, nourishment, training and skills to help them cope with challenges of growing up for them to become independent adults eventually. Parents should build relationship to be the first friend of their children. Children tend to become withdrawn when parents are too authoritarian and harsh thereby making it hard for parents to know the true character and potentials of their children. Besides, the children and the parents grow apart; the gap becomes wider as the children attain adulthood and get more intimate with outsiders. This has resulted into loneliness for aging parents who find it hard to secure the needed attention and care from their children.

Social, emotional and psychological support systems are stronger in cultures where family ties are valued and upheld. Erring children and youths are corrected lovingly by others who are not their parents, everyone watches out for the wellbeing and safety of others and would rally round to help each other when anyone is in need.

RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

People socialize with other people in their neighbourhood, school, work places, place of worship and also during chance meetings. Interaction with other people is the engine that drives organized society which helps to advance human progress and development.

It is necessary to have clear goals and expectations from every relationship be it formal or informal so that parties in the relationship would anticipate their privileges and responsibilities thereby reducing incidence of disappointments.

Friendship is an informal or social relationship with someone who is not a family member, spouse or lover whose company one enjoys and towards whom one has affection; it may be a male friend, female friend or an associate who could provide assistance.

There are various degrees and levels of intimacy with each person that one meets in life. Some acquaintances can have positive or negative influences on each other depending on the interests to which they channel their desires. Teenage to early adult years can be particularly full of tough choices and influences: indecision, ambition, insecurity, transition from parental protection into independence, choosing 'right' career and the 'right spouse' and seeking and desiring to settle to a stable life are some of those challenges. It can be almost daunting but hundreds of millions of other people have been through that stage without losing their head.

COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

A person is an indigene of a community, part of the community that he or she lives and citizen of a country by birth or if by reason of duration of the persons stay in the place the person can become a naturalised citizen according to the constitution of the country.

The conduct, behaviour, expectations and responsibilities of people are guided by generally accepted norms, traditions, value systems of the community and the laws and constitution of the country. Some cultural norms and practices have been influenced over time by religion, cross cultural interactions (including marriage) and civilization trends. The television, religion and the internet have been major propellers of ongoing evolution in social and cultural norms therefore conscious effort should be made to filter between what is good that will be of long term benefit and the ones that can bring instability and regret.

8 PERSONAL QUALITIES FOR TRONG RELATIONSHIPS

1. **GENUINE LOVE:** Genuine love looks beyond the background or of others. Love feels connected to all people as fellow humans who are what they are with their differences by design of nature and would do good within its means without taking undue advantage of others.
2. **HUMILITY:** Ability to be humble and modest in character and attitude makes a person to be approachable and easy to relate well with others.
3. **HUMOUR:** A modest sense of humour creating an amiable and cheerful atmosphere helps to reduce tension and manage anger. A reasonable dose of humour can help to resolve a potential conflict situation and create more understanding.
4. **HARMONY:** Ability to seek and sustain agreeable level of mutual understanding with all persons on issues helps to eliminate misunderstanding and grounds for potential conflict.

5. **INTEGRITY:** Faithfulness, sincerity, honesty and transparency on all issues makes people to be sure what position a person is taking on issues and it also helps to build trust, reliability and character.
6. **COMMUNICATION:** Communication is the lubricant that makes relationship meaningful since it is about people relating with each other; no matter should be too big, too small or too scary to be discussed. A heart that loves would deal with the issue and still sustain the relationship.
7. **COMPANIONSHIP:** Where possible and as much as time would permit, time should be committed to relating with each other by being together, this helps to promote emotional and psychological understanding; discussions are also better handled because whatever is not understood can be repeatedly explained until it is clear.
8. **COMMITMENT:** Patience that fuels the will to sustain relationship through times of joy, periods of misunderstanding or even during personal challenges is an attribute that helps to 'keep on keeping on', this does not exist without commitment to ensure that the relationship is sustained.