

August

CONNECT WITH CARE

NEWSLETTER

# Building New Relationships

“Real connections grow from simple things: time, kindness, and honesty.”

As August bridges summer's ease and school's structure, it's the perfect moment to reflect on how small, intentional acts of care like listening deeply or checking in on a friend strengthen our relationships. Even on relaxing holidays, we crave real connection. A shared laugh between classes or a supportive check-in can make all the difference, because feeling valued starts when we show up for each other. The best mental health boost? Be someone who makes others feel seen.



A truly meaningful relationship goes beyond **convenience**. It's built on deep emotional connection, mutual trust, honest communication, and shared growth. Unlike relationships based on short term comfort, meaningful ones involve vulnerability, empathy, and a shared sense of purpose. Both people support each other's individuality while growing together, resolving conflicts respectfully, and appreciating each other daily. It's not just about being together it's about becoming better, **together**.



Connection isn't about being constantly available; it's about being genuinely present. Use digital tools wisely and protect time for meaningful human moments.

If you are not fully present, then why even be there.

You can be sitting next to someone for a whole day, lending them an ear, but if your mind and heart are not engaged, then the whole conversation amounts to absolutely **nothing**.

Emotional presence is not the same as physical presence, it's giving full emotional attention and empathetic responses, creating a sense of connection, safety, and **understanding**.

In a conversation what really makes the difference is the quality of attention, not merely behaving like you're there.

Presence **without engagement** is nothing more than an empty act.

We're more connected than ever, but many of us still feel distant and unheard. Constant scrolling, distractions, and digital noise are affecting the quality of our relationships. Here's how we can stay truly connected:

**Disconnect to Reconnect:** Take regular breaks from the internet to protect your attention and make space for real-life connection.

**Be Fully Present:** Put the phone away. Listen fully. Undivided attention is a rare and powerful way to show care.

**Set Digital Boundaries:** Decide when and how you want to engage online.

**Take Care of Yourself First:** Do things that refocus and recharge you like reading, walking, or resting. A clear mind helps build better connections.

**Use Tech Intentionally:** Use video calls to connect deeply, apps to meet up, and groups to grow community, but don't let tech control your focus.



VALUE OF THE MONTH:

# Empathy

Empathy means putting yourself in someone else's shoes, not just understanding their words but **truly feeling** what they might be going through. In everyday life, it shows up in small but powerful ways: listening without interrupting, noticing when a friend is upset even if they don't say it, or showing kindness instead of judgment. It's not about fixing someone's problems, it's about **being there** with care, patience, and openness. Empathy helps build stronger, more trusting relationships and reminds people that they're **not** alone.

## Tips:

### Practice active listening

Focus fully on what the other person is saying, don't interrupt, and resist the urge to jump in with solutions.

### Validate feelings

Acknowledge emotions with phrases like "That sounds tough I can see why you'd feel that way," showing acceptance without judgment.

### Imagine their perspective

Consciously put yourself in their shoes: "If I were in their position, what might I feel or think?"

### Respect boundaries

Empathy doesn't mean giving advice or comparing, you can say "I hear you" without trying to fix things.

EDUCATIONAL TOPIC:

## Assertiveness

Assertiveness is the key to long-lasting and healthy relationships, as it ensures respect for all, avoids misunderstandings, and builds trust. By being assertive, you ensure that people don't **walk all over** you, leaving your opinions and emotions unexpressed. When people are assertive, they're more likely to listen, resolve conflicts *calmly*, and understand each other better.





For example, calmly telling a friend when they've upset you can **prevent arguments** and **strengthen** your bond. Assertiveness creates a healthy balance between standing up for yourself and caring for others.

We interact differently with each person in our lives, whether it is a friend, sibling, parent, or classmate. In some relationships we are passive, in others, more aggressive. One important way we can communicate is by being *assertive*. Assertiveness means speaking up for yourself clearly and confidently, expressing your thoughts openly, but respectfully, and **standing your ground** without being passive or aggressive.



*Harvard Study of Adult Development*, one of the longest-running studies on human happiness, shows that people who feel emotionally close to others are not only happier but also **healthier**. These meaningful connections reduce stress, improve emotional resilience, and protect against anxiety and depression. When we feel seen, heard, and supported, our brains release chemicals like **oxytocin** and **serotonin**, which help regulate mood and lower stress levels. Strong relationships also give us a sense of belonging and **safety**, which are key to **emotional stability**.

**In short:** meaningful relationships don't just make life feel better, they help us **cope** better.

## Journal Prompts

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/>



- What does a meaningful relationship look like to you, and why does it matter?
- When was the last time you felt genuinely connected to someone? What made that moment feel real?
- What shared interests could help you start a real conversation with someone?
- How do you make sure there's balance, giving and receiving in your connections?
- What does "holding space" mean to you and how can you try doing it for someone?

### CREDITS

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