

10 Ways to Strengthen Your Relationships

One of my favourite authors on the subject of intimate relationships is [Stephanie Dowrick](#) and this month I'd like to share 10 of her wise ideas for strengthening relationships.

Although they come from her book [The Almost Perfect Marriage](#), I think most of them will work well for any kind of relationship:

1. **Treat others well:** Self-respect and feeling good about yourself live or die on how you treat other people - especially those closest to you. The better you treat other people, the better you'll feel about yourself, and the less obsessed about yourself you are, the easier it will be to behave thoughtfully with others.
2. **Have fun!:** Having fun together is essential - make it a priority.
3. **Be good-humoured:** Good humour may well be the most valuable currency in your relationship. This means, for example: being reliable in your moods, interpreting events positively, tolerating differences in opinion, keeping an eye on the big picture - 'I love this person', accepting with grace when things don't go your way and taking pleasure in your relationship and one another.
4. **Stop beating yourself up:** Silence those complaints about yourself. The way you treat yourself will affect all your relationships, especially the most intimate. Accept who you are. Open your eyes to the strengths you can develop and share.
5. **Don't 'dump' negativity on loved ones:** It's extremely tempting to 'dump' your negativity on someone else - especially your loved ones. Dumping doesn't relieve your tension, nor can it possibly support your relationship. Own your feelings and do something about them. Notice how your moods colour your interpretations. Trust that when other people seem especially annoying, you yourself are out of sorts.
6. **Keep your partner at the centre of your life:** Children, family, friends, colleagues and pets all matter, but keep your partner at the centre of your life. Let the love you create together benefit all those other relationships. Talk to and about one another positively.
7. **Feel secure within yourself:** 'I can't live without you', isn't a compliment. No-one should be required to bring meaning to an empty life. The more secure you feel inwardly, the more secure your relationship can also be. Inner security is something you must give yourself. It will absolutely transform what you can then give to other people and receive from them.
8. **Work things out together:** 'Having problems' is not a problem. Having problems only becomes a problem when you don't know how to talk, listen and work things out.
9. **Use your strengths:** Regard the strengths that each of you have as shared assets within your relationship. Brainstorm what they are. You might be surprised by what your partner sees in you that you don't. Write those strengths down. Acknowledge and validate them. In tough or complex moments, remember those strengths and call on them.
10. **Practise and share your values:** Shared values strengthen a relationship. They give you ground to stand on, especially when you can bring them to life. Talk about why your values matter and what they mean to you. Lean on your values for inspiration and support, such as courage, kindness, loyalty, laughter, trust and forgiveness.

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