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Have you ever wondered how bees up north survive during the bitter winter months? Interestingly, they survive because of mutual aid and unselfish teamwork. When winter arrives, the bees form into a ball. All the bees--even the ones on the outside of the ball--move continually. Their movement is like chaotic dancing.

After a while, the bees change places. The bees in the center of the ball rotate to the outside of the ball, and all the other bees move inward. They all have to sacrifice and move to the outside of the ball and then await their chance to return to the center. To survive the winter, they work together as a team.

If the bees in the center were to decide to not rotate, the entire hive would eventually die. Even the ones in the temporary warmth of the center would die.

Just as the bees cannot survive without the others, no one can achieve long-term success alone. Everyone needs other people's help!

Our relationships, from close family members to co-workers, from bosses to employees, often decide our direction and are an important part of our lives. No one can achieve long-term success working alone on his or her own personal island. Why? The ability to develop trust and get along with others is a basic requirement for success.

A Carnegie Foundation study once showed that only 15% of success could be attributed to job knowledge and technical skills. Of course these factors are necessary, however, they are not the primary determinants of your success. The Carnegie study showed that 85% of a person's success is determined by what the researchers called ability to deal with people and attitude.

Some of us may have a vast circle of relationships. Others may prefer a more intimate group. Yet, the skills in building and maintaining these relationships are shared across the spectrum.

Don't go it alone

Relationships don't just happen. Healthy relationships take time and energy from the people involved, and these healthy relationships have a tendency to grow and change over time.

Researchers have found that the basis for any healthy relationship is trust. Individuals within healthy relationships also have a willingness to talk through problems, to share openly, and to develop a comfortable way to share positive and negative feelings with each other.

One of our most important choices is whom we hang around with. Eventually, we become like the five people we hang around with the most, which could be a blessing or a curse. Be careful who you choose as your closest associates or with whom you invest your time. Being around people who are like a swamp--with bloodsucking mosquitoes, diseases, alligators, and snakes--will drain you and prevent you from achieving your goals.

Whether the relationship is with your partner, boss, coworkers, or friends, there's always room for improvement. Here are five steps to help cement relationships:

1) *Find peace with yourself.* Your relationships reflect the relationship you have with yourself. Nobody but you can make you happy. It is futile to look elsewhere to find happiness. Treat yourself with caring acceptance and gentle compassion. And always remember: you have to be a friend before you can make a friend.

2) *Show people that you care about them.* Think of those who have made you feel special. What did they probably do? They made it obvious they cared about you. No relationship can strengthen and grow in an environment of negativity. Positive thoughts and deeds inspire other people's respect and cause them to value their relationships with you.

3) *Despite a busy schedule, take time to make contact and nurture relationships.* Positive relationships

require dedicated time. Let the people most important in your life know you have time for them.

4) *Because conflicts will occur in any relationship, be willing to compromise rather than focusing on winning or losing an argument.* The ultimate test of a relationship is to disagree but to respect the other person, acknowledge your agreement to disagree, and move forward without bitterness.

5) *Practice forgiveness when the relationship is tested.* Many counselors have referred to forgiveness as the “oil” of relationships. Be patient and allow time for you and the other person to grow. However, if you are continually forgiving, it may be time to reconsider the relationship.

Of course there may be times in life when you have to go it alone for bit--like when taking a trip by yourself for some “me” time or spending private time in nature--but typically you will need to seek out relationships with others in order to advance your life, career, or business.

Jesus Christ, whether you believe in him or not, may be the greatest leader of all time. Over 2,000 years after his death, billions of people are still motivated to follow him. Yet Jesus couldn't and still can't do it by himself. He relied on and still relies on disciples to carry out his message to people on every corner of the Earth. So, even Jesus Christ, whom many consider to be the Son of God, couldn't go it alone.

Social researchers continually find that healthy relationships are a necessity for success. Relationships provide someone to share with, someone to learn from, someone to talk to, and someone to confide in. They offer understanding when we fail, solace when we grieve, and celebration when we continue with our lives. Strive to create and endure your journey with the benefit of positive relationships. Don't go it alone.

~ The End ~