



## **If you want better relationships in 2019, do these 6 things**

Experts share what you can do to make your relationships even better for the new year

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New year, new you — right? While many of us get caught up in resolutions around losing weight or saving money, it's also an important time to take stock of your relationships. *All* of them. If you want to step up your relationship game, whether it's with your spouse, co-worker, or family members, there are a few things you can do to take a good one to great.

Below, relationship experts share six things you can do to make your **relationships even better** in 2019.

### **If you're starting out a new relationship...**

"Understand the difference between a 'Red Flag,' a 'Hmmm,' and an 'Irritant,' so that you do not overreact or underreact, and then act accordingly," said **online dating coach** Andi Forness. She explained that a 'Red Flag' behavior is a hard stop, a 'Hmmm' means you need to have a conversation about whatever's bothering you, and you should blow off an 'Irritant' because not everyone is perfect.

### **If you're solidly in a relationship...**

Learn to negotiate and solve problems together. "Generally speaking, **men value competency** and problem-solving. **Women value intimacy** and emotional connection," said Tina B. Tessina, Ph.D., psychotherapist and author of ***Dr. Romance's Guide to Finding Love Today***. Learning successful problem-solving ends fighting and power struggles, and therefore leads to more intimacy.

For example, Tessina explained, "She may think he's focused entirely on time, power, or money, but what he's really trying to do is create enough security that he can feel safe to let his guard down. [In turn,] He may think she's nagging and bugging him, but what she's trying to do is create a comforting and soothing atmosphere where she can relax and feel connected."

### **If you're looking for a relationship...**

Forness advises people to **curb their need to over-give** in a relationship because it's actually selfish. "Over-giving pushes people away versus drawing them in," she said. "If you are over-giving, you take up all the space in the relationship and the other person doesn't have a chance to reciprocate. It makes for a very imbalanced relationship and some crazy passive aggressive behavior for the giver."

### **If you want to build more platonic relationships...**

**Robin M. Deutsch, Ph.D., ABPP**, founder of the Center of Excellence for Children, Families and the Law at William James College, encourages people to strengthen their social support network. "Healthy relationships with others are directly linked to a sense of well-being," says Deutsch. If you want to strengthen your existing relationships or create new ones, take small steps, she said.

"Join interest groups such as running clubs, seek peer/support groups for causes or goals that are important to your career or personal life, and connect with like-minded colleagues at work."

Although many of these groups can be accessed or joined via technology, make sure you aren't using technology exclusively. "Organic, real-life social contact is important for maintaining a healthy social support network," said Deutsch. "We are not alone and have others to share and connect with."

### **If you're hoping to improve your family relationships...**

Include everyone in everything: prepare meals together, solve problems together, make plans together, have fun together. "Even small children have ideas that are useful, and everyone can do something to help," said Tessina. "This is what creates a family feeling. Instead of making rules and giving orders, just invite everyone to join in and do something specific to help."

### **If you're trying to better workplace relationships or friendships...**

"Try to see the best in the other person, and not focus on what isn't working for you about them," suggested Lindsey Metselaar, relationship expert and host of **We Met At Acme** podcast. "Understand that we must accept that which we cannot change, especially in a platonic, workplace, or family relationship. The more you accept about this person and appreciate their good qualities, the happier you will be."

### **If you're looking to improve *\*any\** relationship...**

If you want a better relationship in 2019 (literally *any* kind), clinical/community psychologist and psychoanalyst, Mark B. Borg, Jr., Ph.D., suggests taking in what other people have to give. "In other words, the willingness, capacity, and effort to accept, take in, and make use of what other people in our lives are offering us," he explained. "Good relationships are reciprocal, mutual, and, if we don't allow ourselves to receive, they can become lopsided."

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