





# Relationships: Being a Friend, Partner, Parent, and Employee

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| Activity 10-1 | <b>What's New?</b>                             |  10-15 minutes   |
| Activity 10-2 | <b>What's Important<br/>in a Relationship?</b> |  30-40 minutes   |
| Activity 10-3 | <b>The Relationship Scale</b>                  |  40-50 minutes |
| Activity 10-4 | <b>Feedback/Wrap-up</b>                        |  10-15 minutes |
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## Key Concepts

- Throughout life, a person develops various types of relationships with many people, but all successful relationships have certain basic qualities.
- Most people have some relationships that are going well and others that need improvement.
- When people identify relationships that need improvement and establish goals for enhancing those relationships, they are more likely to feel good about themselves.

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## Materials Checklist

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### Activity 10-2 What's Important in a Relationship?

- Paper and pencils (for everyone)
  - Newsprint
  - Marker
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### Activity 10-3 The Relationship Scale

- Handout, "Setting Goals to Improve Relationships"
- Paper and pencils (for everyone)

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## What's New?

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**Planning Note:** Remind the group of what took place at the last session. Say something like, “Last time we talked about how to be effective in managing or correcting your children’s difficult behavior, and we emphasized the importance of developing alternatives to hitting.” Ask the following questions to discuss the men’s reactions to the last session.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. Does anybody have any reactions to the last session?
2. Did any of you take care of your children since the last session? If so, how did things go? Were you able to use any of the suggestions or solutions we discussed for managing your children’s behavior? If so, which suggestions did you use, and how did they work?
3. Did you talk with anybody (such as your child’s mother or grandparents) about the new approaches to discipline that you learned? If so, what reactions did they have?
4. What do you think you can do to get your child’s mother and other caregivers to try some of the approaches you learned for disciplining your children? Are their approaches to discipline consistent with yours?
5. Do you have any additional questions or concerns about your children that you would like to bring up today?

**Tell the men** that today they will talk more about relationships. Ask, “Did anybody think about relationships since the last time we met? Would someone like to talk about a relationship that he has (such as with his child, child’s mother, partner, etc.) that is going well? What about a relationship that is not going as well as you would like?”

**Explain** that today’s activities will focus on the different kinds of relationships that the men have, in order to identify what is desirable about those relationships and what needs to be changed.

## What's Important in a Relationship?

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**Purpose:** To help the men identify important qualities in their various relationships (including with friends, children and family, romantic partners, and coworkers). To reinforce the idea that “people need people” to survive in this world.

**Materials:** Paper and pencils (for everyone); newsprint and marker.

**Time:** 30-40 minutes.

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**Planning Note:** Because talking about relationships produces intense feelings in people, it is important that group members trust each other *before* doing this activity. If the men are reluctant to discuss their personal experiences, or if they have not yet bonded as a group, skip the activity for now.

Fathers who are having difficulty managing their relationships may need to be referred to outside help, especially if the relationships are volatile or dangerous. Plan for such referrals in advance by making sure that the case manager (or whoever is responsible for counseling services) is available to consult with individuals after the session.

As you facilitate the group, raise questions about both the positive *and* the negative aspects of how the fathers are relating to important people in their lives — especially custodial parents, grandparents, and others who are involved with their children. The goals of this activity are to reinforce the men’s ability to support their children and to increase their effectiveness as fathers, while also improving their relationships with their children, children’s mother, employer, etc. This involves helping the men to confront aspects of their relationships that need to change or improve in order for them to be successful men, fathers, and providers; it also involves helping them to identify the steps they can take to change or improve these relationships.

Session 11, “Understanding Male-Female Relationships,” focuses on romantic relationships. Activities 11-5 and 11-6 require advanced planning so that you can invite guests to speak to the group. To prepare the men for this, it is necessary for you to read through Session 11 before conducting Session 10.

**Procedure:** Introduce Activity 10-2 by saying something like, “Human beings need to feel connected to others. We all experience different kinds of relationships in our lives — for example, with our friends and family, romantic partners, and coworkers. Today we will talk about the qualities that make relationships good. We will begin with friendships.”

**Ask for a volunteer** to describe who is a good friend. Then ask, “What qualities make this person a good friend?” After the volunteer has responded, have the men brainstorm a list of qualities that they think are important in a friendship. Pose the question, “If you were going to make friends with someone, what would you want that relationship to include?” (That is, “What makes a friendship?”) Record the group’s responses on newsprint, and post it in the room. Likely responses will include:

- Trust
- Good communication
- Shared interest
- Respect
- Responsibility  
(following through on commitments)
- Sense of humor
- Understanding
- Support during both good and bad times

**Then ask,** “How do you usually choose friends? What factors do you consider about a person when you are deciding whether you will become friends? How important is it that your friends have a good influence on you? How important is it that you and your friends have the same views or lifestyles?”

**Now ask,** “What are some of the things that might destroy a friendship for you?” (That is, “What breaks up a friendship?”) Likely responses will include:

- Violence or fighting
- Misunderstanding
- Breaking of trust
- Lack of time
- Disrespect
- Not being responsible (not following through on commitments)
- Being a bad or negative influence

**Now ask** for a volunteer to tell the group about an experience where a friendship was destroyed. How did the friendship end? What was the experience like? How did you feel about losing this friend?

**Next**, tell the men that they will use the same process to identify what they think is important in four other types of relationships:

1. With their children
2. With their family members
3. With their romantic partners
4. With their employers

**Explain** that the men will divide into four small groups, each of which will consider one of these types of relationships. The small groups should:

- Review the list of important qualities for friendships (posted on newsprint).
- Delete any qualities that are not important for the type of relationship their group is discussing.
- Add any qualities that they consider important for the type of relationship their group is discussing.

**In addition**, have each small group describe the qualities of someone with whom they could have good relationship of the type under discussion. (For example, if the group is focusing on coworkers, describe a good relationship with an employer.)

**Each small group** should appoint a *leader* (to keep participants focused on their task) and a *reporter* (to share their responses with the larger group).

**Allow 10 minutes** for small-group work, then ask for each group's report. After each report, ask the other small groups whether they have any comments to add.

**End** the activity by asking the following questions.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. Which relationship qualities were mentioned by every small group?
2. What differences are there in the qualities listed for a romantic relationship and the qualities listed for a friendship?
3. How are employer-employee relationships different from friendships? What are some of the things that destroy this type of relationship? (In this relationship,

the employer has some authority over the employee. Although their respect can be mutual, their sharing of information is usually limited to work-related topics and is usually one-sided. When employer and employee try to become “friends,” problems often arise.)

4. How are father-child relationships different from friendships? What are some of the things that destroy this type of relationship? (Parents are legally responsible for the care of their children. Children do not have the emotional and intellectual capacity of adults, and most look to their parents for guidance and direction. Children should not be used as friends or confidants. If parents fail to consider this, problems are likely to arise.)
5. How do relationships vary within families? (For example, how does the way in which parents and children relate differ from the way in which brothers and sisters relate? How do relationships in a three- or four-generation family differ from relationships in a family that is composed of only a single mother and her children? How do family relationships differ from one cultural group to another?)
6. Considering your relationships with friends, children, family members, and employers, which type of relationship is hardest to maintain? Why?
7. How hard is it for you to have a good relationship with the mother of your children and with *her* family, friends, and others in your children’s lives?
8. How have all these relationships changed as you grew older? Overall, are your relationships more satisfying than they were, or less satisfying?
9. How would you describe the relationships that have formed in this peer support group?
10. How would your child, boss, or romantic partner describe your qualities in the relationships they have with you?
11. How do your relationships influence your decisions and choices? (For example, do you make choices about how you spend your time based on your responsibilities as a father, romantic partner, or employee?)
12. What, if anything, do you feel you have to work on to be a better friend, romantic partner, father, or employee?
13. What do your relationships with other adults teach your children?

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## The Relationship Scale

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**Purpose:** To evaluate the effectiveness of participants' relationships with important people in their lives. To establish goals to improve their important relationships.

**Materials:** Handout, "Setting Goals to Improve Relationships"; paper and pencils (for everyone).

**Time:** 40-50 minutes.

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**Planning Note:** When conducting this activity, it is important to help the fathers who do not visit their children think about what has gone wrong in their relationships with their children and to identify ways to improve these relationships. When completing the handout "Setting Goals to Improve Relationships," fathers in this situation may need to think about how to reestablish communication with their children's mother before they can arrange to visit their children. It is important that the fathers see how *not* having a relationship with their children will affect the children's lives. That is, they need to evaluate their "non-relationship" with their children.

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**Procedure:** Begin by stating that in Activity 10-2 the men identified which qualities are important in different kinds of relationships. Now they will assess whether their real relationships demonstrate those qualities. Make the point that everyone has some relationships that are going well and others that need improvement. This activity will help the fathers identify relationships that need improvement and then develop a plan to make positive changes. Explain that certain people can strongly influence whether or not the participants will succeed as fathers — for example, their children's mothers and grandparents, their romantic partners, and even their employers. Admit that some of these relationships will never be perfect, but emphasize that the fathers can work to make each relationship as positive as possible, given the circumstances involved.

**Distribute** paper and pencils, asking each participant to list the five most important or most highly valued relationships in their lives. (Responses may include anyone — the participant’s children, mother or father, grandparents, other family members, best friends, or employer.) Then ask each man to list:

- Three reasons why these relationships are so important
- Three ways that his life is affected (or might be affected) when these relationships do not function well.

**Encourage the men** to be honest, and ask them to evaluate each of their five relationships, using the list of important qualities from Activity 10-2. How many of these qualities are present in each relationship? Tell the men to rate each relationship on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 = messed up and 5 = fantastic) and to write the rating next to each relationship. After approximately 10 minutes, ask for a volunteer to describe one relationship that is working well for him (that he rated 4 or 5). Ask him to describe specifically what makes that relationship work: What’s good about the relationship? What role does he play in making it a good relationship? What role does the other person play? How well does the other person know him? How does he think the other person would rate the relationship? What, if anything, might make this relationship even better?

**Next**, ask for a volunteer to discuss a relationship that needs improvement (that he rated 3 or less). Again, ask for specifics: What’s wrong with this relationship? What role do you play in this? What role does the other person play? How important is it to you that this relationship be improved? How would you (or your child, partner, etc.) benefit if this relationship were better? What would you like to change in this relationship?

**Distribute** the handout “Setting Goals to Improve Relationships.” Review it with the whole group, using one volunteer’s situation as an example. First, have the group help the volunteer establish a goal for improving his relationship (What, exactly, would he like to change?). Then have the group identify the steps he can take to accomplish this goal (for example, ask the other person to talk about the relationship; make a point of showing up on time; follow through on his word; find a way to avoid arguments; etc.). Finally, the group should help the volunteer list the skills that he will need to accomplish his goal. Examples of skills might include: listening; compromising (being able to give and take); using “I” statements (telling the other

person what he feels about the person's behavior); conflict management (resolving conflicts without violence); patience and assertiveness (standing up for himself and expressing his true feelings while making an effort to be considerate of the other person's feelings).

**Finally**, ask each participant to complete the handout, setting goals to improve one important relationship. Acknowledge that relationship problems are *always* caused by both parties. Although one person cannot control the other's behavior, both people can control *themselves*. Often, when one person makes changes in the relationship, it leads to changes in the other person. Encourage patience, pointing out that change sometimes happens slowly. Things may even get worse before they get better, because both people are accustomed to their old behavior. If the relationship is valuable, however, the effort to improve it will benefit both parties.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. What steps have you taken in the past that have strengthened your important relationships? (Ask for specific examples of relationships with friends, custodial parents, children, family members, and employers.)
2. What things have you done in relationships that have not worked so well? (Again, ask for specific examples of the types of relationships covered today.)
3. What happens when you are in a relationship that you would rather not negotiate (such as with your children's mother or your employer)? Do you have to accept that relationship as it is? Or can you make changes in yourself that might improve the relationship?
4. What goals have you set to improve your relationships? Can you think of anything else that might help you?
5. How do you know when a relationship is not going to work (or is not right for you)? What do you do when you know this? Can you think of anything else that you might do?
6. Have you ever had to end a relationship that was not right for you? (Again, get examples of all types of relationships.) What was this like? How did you end the relationship?
7. Did you ever have an important relationship that was taken away or ended by somebody else? What was this like? What did you do about it?
8. In the future, how do you see your relationships changing? (For example, how will your relationship with your children change as they get older? If you don't have contact with your children now, do you expect this to change as your children get older?) What do you think will make a difference in these relationships? (For example, do you think paying child support, establishing regular visits with your children, or having a better job will change your relationships with them?)

## Setting Goals to Improve Relationships

Relationship with \_\_\_\_\_

*✍ Identify the person here*

### My Goal

Be specific and realistic in setting goals. For example:

- I want to increase the amount of time I spend with my child.
- I want to stop fighting so much with my child's grandmother.

My goal: \_\_\_\_\_

*✍ Write your goal here*

### Steps to Accomplish This Goal

1. I will \_\_\_\_\_

*✍ Write what action you will take*

by \_\_\_\_\_

*✍ Date*

2. I will \_\_\_\_\_

*✍ Action*

by \_\_\_\_\_

*✍ Date*

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**Skills Needed to Improve This Relationship**

- 1.  
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- 2.  
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- 5.  
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## Feedback/Wrap-up

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Ask the following questions to talk about today's session.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. What, if anything, have you learned about your current relationships?
2. What ideas did you get today about ways to improve your relationships?
3. In what specific ways can you use today's information in your important relationships?

***Tell*** the men that they will continue to talk about relationships in Session 11. Ask them to think about their romantic relationships. What have they liked about these relationships, and what have they wanted to change? Thank the fathers for their participation, and remind them of when the next session meets.